

=SPECIAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH CALENDAR, P12=
THE INDYPENDENT

#232: FEBRUARY 2018 • INDYPENDENT.ORG

TENANTS UNITE!
P8

**JUDAH FRIEDLANDER:
WORLD CHAMPION**
P18

**REMEMBERING
URSULA LE GUIN**
P22



Jani Cauthen (center) and her children Jamya (left) and Jahsiah Montrevil.

ERIN SHERIDAN

LIFE AFTER DEPORTATION

THEIR FATHER WAS RETURNED TO HAITI. NOW WHAT?
LYDIA MCMULLEN-LAIRD, P5

THE VITO MARCANTONIO FORUM PRESENTS

OLIVER STONE'S
**UNTOLD HISTORY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Launch of a four-session series of Oliver Stone's multi-part documentary

SAT 2/10 2-4:30PM

FUTURE SESSIONS: March 10th, April 14th, and May 12th

This series will focus on the first four chapters of The Untold History, which spans the events leading up to United States entry into World War II until the outbreak of the Korean War.

**COMMUNITY ROOM MULBERRY STREET
PUBLIC LIBRARY, 10 JERSEY ST.**
(BTW LAFAYETTE AND MULBERRY STS.)

Light Refreshments / **Free Admission**



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR



FEB 3–FEB 25

Various times • \$18
THEATER: *OR CURRENT RESIDENT*
This family drama throws the covers off an eccentric little universe that has survived on fortitude and self-deception; a universe that now lies shivering in the cold glare of unexpected, untenable revelations. Visit theaterforthenewcity.net for showtimes and tickets.
THEATRE FOR THE NEW CITY
155 1st Ave.

WED FEB 7
6:30PM–8PM • \$10 adults, \$8 students and seniors
PANEL: WHAT ART SPEAKS TO THESE TIMES
This panel brings together four artists in the exhibition “An Incomplete History of Protest: Selections from the Whitney’s Collection, 1940–2017” to speak about their aesthetic approaches to the political urgencies of the present. Speakers include Ja’Tovia Gary, Daniel Joseph Martinez, Julie Mehretu and Dread Scott.
WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
99 Gansevoort St.

WED FEB 7
6:30PM • FREE, reservations required
PANEL: TRUMP’S NEW

YORK
Acclaimed biographer David Nasaw leads a discussion on how Donald Trump rose to great wealth and power in this liberal, capitalist mecca. He speaks with Gwenda Blair (*The Trumps: Three Generations of Builders and a President*) and David Cay Johnston (*The Making of Donald Trump*). Visit gc.cuny.edu/publicprograms to register.
CUNY GRADUATE CENTER
365 Fifth Ave., Elebash Recital Hall

WED FEB 7
7 PM • FREE
PANEL: NARRATIVES FROM INSIDE
How can storytelling convey the experience of incarceration? Be it photographs, podcasts or fiction workshops, panelists Nigel Poor, Virginia Grise, Russell Craig and Virgilio Bravo bring stories of incarceration beyond prison walls. Following this panel, there will be a short reception to celebrate the opening of the exhibition “Prison Nation.”
APERTURE FOUNDATION
547 W 27th St. 4th Fl.

FRI FEB 9
7:30PM–9PM • FREE
MUSIC: AWA SANGHO
Awa Sangho, “the Golden

Voice of Mali,” is a tireless advocate of women’s issues and an explosive performer.
LINCOLN CENTER
10 Lincoln Center Plz

SAT FEB 10
2PM–4:30PM • FREE
SCREENING: *THE UNTOLD HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES*
The Vito Marcantonio Forum is launching a four-session series based on Oliver Stone’s multi-part documentary. This series will focus on events leading up to World War II and the beginning of the Korean War. Future screenings March 10, April 14 and May 12.
MULBERRY BRANCH LIBRARY, COMMUNITY ROOM
10 Jersey St.

SAT FEB 10
8PM–12AM • \$10 suggested donation
PARTY: HEARTS AND ROSES VALENTINE’S DANCE
Calling all reds and cupids! Join the Democratic Socialists’ Feminist Working Group for a Valentine’s dance.
MAYDAY SPACE
176 St Nicholas Ave., BKLYN

SUN FEB 11
6:30PM–9:00PM • \$30
PARTY: QUEER SOUP NIGHT (QSN) SPECIAL EDITION: SOUP + SLOW JAMS VDAY
Intimate, sexy, soupy — dress up and get down at this Valentine’s event benefiting the New Sanctuary Coalition and QSN. Soup, pie, desserts, prizes, deejay, cash bar.
PELS PIE CO.
446 Rogers Ave., BKLYN

TUE FEB 13
6PM–4AM • \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door
MUSIC: MEHANATA BAR’S 20TH ANNIVERSARY FEAT. EUGENE HÜTZ OF GOGOL BORDELLO
Special performances by gypsy punk originators Eugene Hütz and Sergey Ryabtsev of Gogol Bordello and klezmer legends Frank London & Deep Singh. .
MEHANATA BULGARIAN BAR
113 Ludlow

MON FEB 19
8:45PM • \$12
SCREENING: *LA HAINE*
When a young Arab is arrested and beaten unconscious by police, a riot erupts in the impoverished suburbs outside of Paris. Three of the victim’s peers wander aimlessly

about their home turf in the aftermath of the violence as they try to come to grips with their outrage over the brutal incident.
VIDEOLOGY BAR & CINEMA
308 Bedford Ave., BKLYN

WED FEB 13
6:30PM–8:30PM • FREE
SCREENING: 16MM FILM NIGHT: EARLY SHORTS BY RENOWNED FEMALE DIRECTORS
A selection from the likes of Susan Seidelman, Martha Coolidge, Julie Dash.
THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Fifth Avenue at 42nd St

THU FEB 22
7PM–9PM • FREE
PUBLIC FORUM: WHICH WAY IN KOREA?
As Trump threatens to give North Korea a “bloody nose,” learn why diplomacy is the only strategy for a successful resolution of this crisis.
BROOKLYN COMMONS
388 Atlantic Ave., BKLYN

FRI FEB 23
7PM–9PM • FREE
TALK: WOMEN OF THE RAMAPOUGH LENAPE NATION
Photographer Lisa Levart will discuss and show images from her new series

WINTER FUND DRIVE UPDATE!

WE HAVE RAISED \$22,450 AS OF JANUARY 31. TO REACH OUR GOAL OF \$35,000, WHICH IS CRUCIAL TO HAVING THE RESOURCES WE NEED IN 2018, WE HAVE EXTENDED OUR FUND DRIVE DEADLINE THREE MORE WEEKS TO FEB. 21. IF YOU ENJOY READING THE INDY EVERY MONTH, PLEASE GIVE WHAT YOU CAN TODAY. IT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

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THE INDYPENDENT

FEBRUARY

WWW.AWASANGHO.COM

"Women of the Ramapough Lenape Nation," which explores the tribe's ancient, mythological stories surrounding matriarchy. Levart will be joined by several of the women who participated in the project.

AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITY HOUSE

39 Eldridge St., 4th Fl.

FRI FEB 23

8PM • \$15

MUSIC: THE SKATALITES

Jamaica's premier ska band since 1964, the Skatalites backed artists like Bob Marley and Toots and The Maytals. They bring their infectious brand of bluesy, jazzy ska to town with the Alchemystics and Moha.

BROOKLYN BOWL

61 Wythe Ave., BKLYN

SUN FEB 25

1PM • FREE

PARADE: CHINESE LUNAR NEW YEAR

Year of the Dog is upon us.

CHINATOWN-LOWER MANHATTAN

SUN FEB 25

6PM-8PM • \$10

MUSIC: THE NEW SCHOOL AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ ORCHESTRA

This 22-piece orchestra directed by Bobby Sanabria brings it with big band mambo, jazz and more.

BRONX MUSIC HERITAGE CENTER

1303 Louis Nine Blvd, Bronx

MON FEB 26

7PM • \$15

PANEL: LET'S WOMAN-SPLAIN ROMANCE!

The romance genre has been objectified since its inception, but has grown into a genre primarily written for women by women. Some of the foremost authors of the genre and a few of the young, diverse voices actively working towards its evolution come together to turn the tables, and woman-splain the appeal, power and strength of romance to an open-minded, male moderator.

STRAND BOOK STORE

828 Broadway

FRI MARCH 2

7PM-8:30PM • FREE

SCREENING: JOHN WATERS' PINK FLAMINGOS

Pink Flamingos tells the story of the unforgettably terrible Babs Johnson (Divine) and her battle with a criminal couple (David Lochary and Mink Stole) who aim to steal her title as "The Filthiest Person Alive." This screening is part of an ongoing exhibit hosted by the Morgan Library on Waters' confidant, Peter Hujar, on-view through May 20.

THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM

225 Madison Ave.

SUN MARCH 4

11AM-5PM • \$3

MARKET: VINYL REVOLUTION RECORD SHOW

Two rooms, 55 dealer tables, 1,000's of rare and collectible vinyl records... Beer! DJ Laura Rebel Angel spins all day.

BOHEMIAN HALL & BEER GARDEN

29-19 24th Ave., Queens

THE WOMEN WITH THE GOLDEN

VOICE: Awa Sangho belts Malian marvels at Lincoln Center, Feb. 9.

DOGGY-STYLE:

Celebrate the Year of the Dog in Manhattan's Chinatown this month.

PATRICK KWAN

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Before you laugh, hear what the comic has to say.

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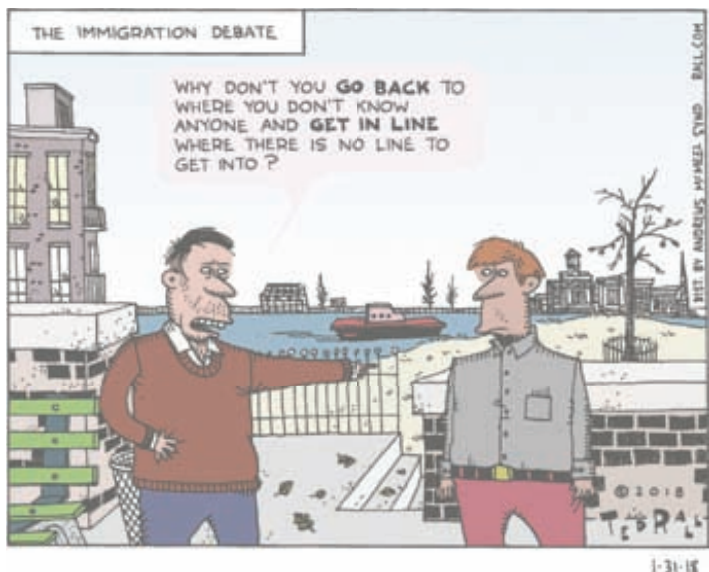
Lift off with Khruangbin airlines.

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A new book explores faith, immigration and workers power.

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Remembering Ursula Le Guin.



WHAT WE’VE LEARNED FROM RAVI RAGBIR

By RENÉE FELTZ

It was with a mix of excitement and dread that I wrote down the courtroom where a federal judge would decide on Jan. 29 whether to release Ravi Ragbir from an immigrant jail. Just weeks earlier, I was shocked when agents arrested Ragbir during a routine check-in. Flipping my reporter’s notebook shut, I jumped on the subway with enough time to arrive early and get a seat at the hearing. It was a busy day, but I had learned a lot from Ragbir and felt dedicated to showing up. I also wanted to see if his refusal to be dehumanized had the same impact on the judge as it did on me.

I first met Ragbir in 2011, when I accompanied him to his check-in under the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program (ISAP), run by a private company that contracts with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In an article for *The Indypendent* I wrote about how he and several friends nervously gathered at the ISAP office in downtown Brooklyn, wondering if this would be the day ICE agents decided he was being deported because of a single offense for which he had already served his time. When he confirmed it wouldn’t, Ravi texted a group of supporters:

“Left ISAP. All is good,” he wrote. They texted back messages like, “Thank God. Thank God.”

This was the first time I saw the strategy Ragbir would develop into an official accompaniment program that trains volunteers to join immigrants at their check-ins, in order to show ICE they have community support. The workshops have drawn hundreds of new allies to the basement of Judson Memorial Church, home of the New Sanctuary Coalition of New York, which Ragbir co-founded and now heads. After witnessing the anguish of immigrants and their loved ones in the check-in

waiting areas, accompaniment volunteers often emerge with a new understanding of how broken the system is, and an outraged determination to stop their separation.

That outrage came to the fore when ICE detained Ragbir at his routine check-in on Jan. 11, handcuffing him in front of his wife and denying him a chance to talk to his lawyer, despite pending reviews of his immigration case and a challenge to his original conviction. The response was a mass protest by his supporters, including members of New York City Council. They were joined in their demand for his release by members of Congress, and then by the judge at Ragbir’s hearing on Jan. 29.

As I sat in the packed courtroom with other reporters who were moved into the jury box to make room for a mix of clergy, family and New Sanctuary volunteers, U.S. District Judge Katherine Forrest announced she had carefully reviewed the “entire record in this matter” and concluded:

“The Court in fact agrees with the Government that the statutory scheme ... allows them to do what was done here. But there are times when statutory schemes may be implemented in ways that tread on rights that are larger, more fundamental. Rights that define who we are as a country, what we demand of ourselves and what we have guaranteed to each other: our constitutional rights. That has occurred here.”

The courtroom erupted in cheers as Judge Forrest said the way Ravi had been detained was “unnecessarily cruel,” seeming to acknowledge what I and so many others have witnessed while reporting on Ragbir and accompanying him and other immigrants at their ICE check-ins.

Within hours, Ragbir was released. He welcomed his relative freedom after more than two weeks “locked in a box, in a cage.” But he said he was clearly targeted because of his activism, along with several other immigrant leaders nationwide.

After accompanying Ragbir to his last check-in with ICE, lawmakers — including Councilmembers Ydanis Rodriguez and Jumaane Williams, who were arrested protesting his detention — are calling for him to be granted a “permanent presence in the United States”

WELCOME BACK: Ravi Ragbir is greeted by his wife, Amy Gottlieb, and supporters after being released from ICE detention.



WILL COLEY

ONE MAN’S REFUSAL TO BE DEHUMANIZED

that would relieve him of the check-in ordeal. His Defense Committee and lawyers will ask ICE to extend his current stay of deportation on Feb. 9 as they continue to appeal his case. Meanwhile, the New Sanctuary Coalition’s next accompaniment training is scheduled for Feb. 26.

The New Sanctuary Coalition aims to activate congregations and other allies in their “accompaniment program,” and offers a weekly legal clinic to help those facing deportation manage their cases. For more information visit NewSanctuaryNYC.org or call 646-395-2925.

SOME PLACES YOU CAN FIND

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192 EAST BROADWAY
- LES PEOPLE’S FEDERAL CREDIT UNION
39 AVENUE B
- TOMPKINS SQUARE LIBRARY
331 E. 10TH ST.
- BLUESTOCKINGS
172 ALLEN ST.
- THEATER FOR THE NEW CITY
155 FIRST AVE.
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52 PRINCE ST.
- FILM FORUM
209 W. HOUSTON ST.
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22 E. 12TH ST.

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14TH To 96TH ST

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112 E. 96TH ST.

ABOVE 96TH ST.

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'MY KIDS DON'T HAVE A DAD'

AS THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S IMMIGRATION POLICIES TAKE HOLD, FAMILIES LIKE THAT OF JEAN MONTREUIL ARE LEFT TO PICK UP THE PIECES

BY LYDIA McMULLEN-LAIRD

At the beginning of January, Jean Montreuil was running a successful passenger van service in Queens and helping to raise three children with his ex-wife. These days Montreuil, 49, wakes up each morning in a childhood friend's basement in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, wondering how he will survive in a country he barely remembers and whose language he's struggling to relearn.

Back in New York, Jani Cauthen pushes ahead as best she can while working a day job and supporting her 19-year-old daughter, who she had through a prior relationship, as well as raising their two youngest children, ages 14 and 10.

Cauthen's oldest daughter, Janiah Heard, recently began her fourth semester at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, New York. She worries it may be her last as her father is no longer available to help cover her college expenses. "I try to keep a positive mindset," said Janiah. "But now my dad is no longer here with me. What do you do?"

Their youngest son, Jahsiah Montreuil, is a freshman at Brooklyn Tech High School who likes to play with his Rubik's Cube. These days he's trying to solve a more difficult problem — how to help his father return to the country he called home for 31 years. "A part of me is missing," Jahsiah wrote in a campaign to help raise funds for Montreuil. "You never really know how to feel, but somehow you just feel it. ... I know if he was here, he'd want me to keep going," he said.

Jahsiah did exactly that, and started a change.org petition on Jan. 3, the day Montreuil was detained. The petition calls for halting Montreuil's deportation and has garnered over 12,000 signatures so far. "I am asking you to help as a son and an immigrant rights activist. If you were me and I was you, wouldn't you want me to help?" Jahsiah wrote in the petition's call to action.

ESCALATING DEPORTATIONS

The Trump administration's increasingly aggressive moves to deport longtime residents like Montreuil, who have no violent criminal history, has caused fear in immigrant communities across the nation. In Seattle, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) began deportation proceedings on Dec. 20 for Maru Mora Villapando, a key organizer at the Northwest Detention Center Resistance in Tacoma.

In Detroit, Jorge Garcia, a 39-year-old landscaper with no criminal record, was deported to Mexico on Martin Luther King Jr. Day after 30 years in the United States. And in New York, Ravi Ragbir, executive director of the New Sanctuary Coalition, was detained on Jan. 11. He was held until Jan. 29, when a federal judge ordered his release after his supporters staged a series of protests.

The Haitian community is particularly vulnerable after the Trump administration's decision to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for close to 60,000 Haitians last November. With mass deportations for Haitian TPS recipients slated to begin in July 2019, many more Haitians could suffer the same fate as Montreuil's family.

Cauthen says Trump's policies are separating families and contributing to dysfunctional households while failing to take into consideration the children of the immigrants they are deporting. "My kids don't have a dad. My son's going to graduate from high school in three years and there's no guarantee that his dad's going to be here."

Despite protests that erupted outside an immigration detention cen-

ter in Lower Manhattan after ICE took Montreuil into custody on Jan. 3, he was flown to the Krome Detention Center in Miami and deported 13 days later — one of nearly 100 deportees on an ICE charter plane headed to Haiti and the Dominican Republic on Jan. 16.

Montreuil describes his detention and subsequent deportation as "a shock." He was at home on his lunch break when ICE arrested him, even though he had a check-in scheduled for mid-January. "They didn't have to come to my house," Montreuil said. "I never missed a check-in in 15 years." When Montreuil asked the ICE agents why they arrested him, one of the agents replied, "Don't you see who we have as president now?"

Cauthen suspects ICE and the Bureau of Immigration Appeals (BIA) worked together to orchestrate the deportation, despite a pending appeal of the original deportation order that was issued by ICE in 1994 while Montreuil was serving an 11-year prison stint for possession of cocaine. The deportation order was based on a law that was passed after Montreuil's conviction and therefore unconstitutional, Montreuil's lawyer, Joshua Bardavid, has argued.

After serving out his sentence, Montreuil met Cauthen on a blind date and they started a family and a business together in Queens. But the deportation order continued to weigh heavily on Montreuil and he fell into a depression that affected their family life and ultimately led to the couple's divorce. "I don't regret anything. He's a super dad. He puts his kids first," Cauthen said.

Montreuil was first put in immigration detention in 2005. In 2007, he and Ragbir co-founded the New Sanctuary Coalition, an inter-faith immigrant rights network in New York. Montreuil was nearly deported again in 2010. Cauthen suspects he continued to be targeted by ICE because of his activism.

When Montreuil was finally deported earlier this month, Cauthen said she wasn't angry or sad but immediately got into "fight mode."

"I've been dealing with it for so long," she said. "So I developed a numbness to it."

The experience of being in immigration detention was torture for Montreuil, who says he never wanted to be locked up again after spending more than a decade in prison. "For 17 years, I tried my best not to ever get in trouble again. I did everything [ICE] asked me to do."

Deportees to Haiti are sent to jail upon arrival unless they are picked up by a family member who can prove Haitian citizenship and will take responsibility for housing the deportee. "I'm afraid of that process. And I know people who [have] already died," Montreuil said on *Democracy Now!* last year.

Cauthen said she put together a network of people who could help pick up Montreuil. "In Haiti you have to claim bodies like they're luggage," she said.

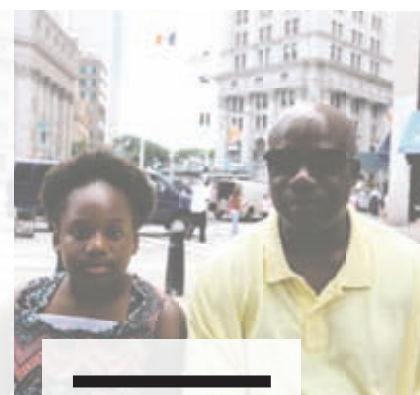
Montreuil arrived in Haiti without any possessions and said he had to wait for Jahsiah to mail him his phone, a portable charger, socks, underwear and clothing. "I opened up that package and was so happy, like a kid on Christmas."

BACK IN HAITI

Two weeks after his return to Haiti, Montreuil said adjusting to his new life might take longer than he expected. Haiti has changed significantly since he left for the United States in 1986. It was the poorest



ERIN SHERIDAN



ELIA GRAN

DIFFICULT TIMES: Jean Montreuil's 14-year-old son Jahsiah.

FATHER & DAUGHTER: Jean Montreuil and his daughter Janiah Heard rest last July following a demonstration outside ICE headquarters in Lower Manhattan.

Continued on page 23

IMMIGRATION, MADE IN THE USA



CHARLYNE ALEXIS

BY PADDY QUICK

The United States population consists almost entirely of immigrants and their descendants. The only Americans whose ancestors did not come here from abroad in the last 500 years are Native Americans, and all except enslaved persons trafficked from Africa came here voluntarily.

Yet the history of immigration in the United States is one of bigotry against successive “othered” ethnic groups, beginning with the influx of Irish Catholics during the 1840s potato famine. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 virtually prohibited Chinese people from entering the country, denied them citizenship and prevented them from bringing family members over. The Immigration Act of 1924 was designed to exclude Jews, Italians and others from southern and eastern Europe. Until the national-origins quota system was repealed in 1965, it allowed barely 100 immigrants a year from China and less than 1,000 from Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados combined.

Today, the main immigrant groups targeted are Latinos — particularly those from Mexico, by far the largest single source of immigrants — and Muslims. Donald Trump blames them for declining wages, accuses them of polluting America’s character and calls them criminals and terrorists. He channels the anger that should be directed at corporate America against immigrants.

THREE ANTI-IMMIGRANT MYTHS

Much of the opposition to immigration is based on a few widespread myths: That immigrants are criminals and parasites who collect welfare and don’t pay taxes.

In reality, undocumented immigrants very rarely receive public assistance or unemployment benefits. These benefits are limited to U.S. citizens or those legally authorized to be in the country, and the documentation required to apply is daunting. The two public benefits the undocumented have automatic access to are emergency-room care and the right of children to enroll in public schools, although local school authorities frequently challenge this.

The second myth is that undocumented workers don’t pay taxes. First, they pay sales tax on things they buy. Second, if they pay rent, it indirectly goes to their landlords’ property taxes — the main source of financing

for public schools in much of the nation. Most important, the Social Security Administration allows anyone, including undocumented immigrants, to obtain Social Security numbers and then pay Social Security taxes. In addition, many undocumented immigrants use other people’s Social Security numbers to work at jobs where they are required — which means that they pay taxes into the system, even though they are not eligible to receive any benefits from it.

The third myth, promulgated by Trump, is that immigrants plague the United States with crimes from murder to rape to theft. In reality, immigrants, whether documented or not, are arrested and convicted at a lower rate than that of people born in the United States. This difference is particularly striking when low-income immigrants are compared with similarly poor native-born people.

Does immigration from low-wage countries drive down the wages of U.S. workers? One argument against that is that a growing economy needs additional workers — who can come from either immigration or teenagers becoming old enough to work and replace people who’ve retired. But in the United States, the birth rate of slightly less than 1.9 children per woman is below the rate of 2.1 that is necessary to maintain a stable population. This means that an increasing proportion of the population will be elderly people who must be supported by those currently working. Immigrants fill that gap in the workforce.

The problem comes when immigrants are denied the same labor rights as other workers. Employers use the threat of deportation to pay undocumented workers below minimum wage, refuse to pay them for all the hours they worked and require them to work in dangerous conditions.

WHY PEOPLE EMIGRATE

People immigrate to the United States for two main reasons: “Pull” factors that make them want to come here, and “push” factors that make them want to leave their home countries. For people in low-wage nations, a main pull factor is the possibility of making more money. That has to be balanced against the difficulty of leaving the communities where they grew up, leaving their family behind and having to learn a new language and adjust to a foreign culture — not to mention the life-threatening risks of crossing the border by trekking

through the desert, or paying as much as a year’s income to smugglers.

Many immigrants also don’t understand that the higher wages in the United States also come with a much higher cost of living. In any case, immigrants from poor countries typically send a large proportion of their income to their families back home.

The “push” factors — the need to escape poverty, unemployment and violence — are often more important. Immigrants from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala are fleeing cities that have among the highest murder rates in the world. The poverty, dictatorships and natural disasters endured by Haiti similarly fuel emigration. In Mexico, the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement devastated farmers and agricultural workers, by allowing imports of cheap U.S.-grown corn to overwhelm the market.

International treaties oblige the United States not only to allow people to apply for asylum from outside the country, but to ask people who are being considered for deportation if they wish to claim asylum. To be granted asylum, people must document a claim that they are being persecuted because of their membership of a cognizable group. Poverty doesn’t qualify, and neither does fleeing a high level of violence, except for domestic violence in places where it is not recognized as a crime.

The United States bears a large part of the responsibility for this, and thus has a moral obligation to ameliorate that damage. It has a long history of intervening militarily or otherwise to support repressive governments — and, from Guatemala in 1954 to Honduras in 2009, to aid or abet the overthrow of democratically-elected governments perceived to be inimical to U.S. corporate interests.

Racism and xenophobia form a lethal combination that threatens to undo many of the achievements of the past in making a better and more just life for Americans. Defending immigrants’ rights is an essential component of any struggle to build a progressive movement in this country.

Paddy Quick is a Professor of Economics at St. Francis College and a member of the Union of Radical Political Economists (URPE).

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METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY

SEE YOU IN COURT

After a five-year campaign by environmental activists, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced his intention to divest over \$5 billion in city pension money from fossil fuel stocks by 2022. Coupled with the January announcement, the city filed a lawsuit against five of the world's largest oil companies — ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP, Shell, ConocoPhillips — for damages related to climate change. The de Blasio administration also plans to sue leading Big Pharma companies implicated in the opioid epidemic.

opment projects like the Penn Station renovation and the Second Avenue Subway. Noting that the MTA has wasted billions of dollars on superfluous projects dear to the governor (who has systematically underfunded it), critics charge that the city is being asked to bail out the MTA, without any guarantee the money will actually go towards fixing the subways.

FREE RIDER: Gov. Cuomo hopes to escape from his MTA funding obligations and force the city to foot the bill.

COUGH IT UP

A 16-member task force convened by Gov. Andrew Cuomo to explore the possibility of congestion pricing on New York City roads issued its report in January. Under the committee's proposal, trucks would be charged \$25, taxis and other for-hire vehicles \$2 to \$5 per ride to travel in Manhattan south of 60th Street. Revenues raised would be put towards the city's ailing subway system, funding for which, has habitually been diverted by the governor and his predecessors. In a chicken-or-egg twist, the report concludes, "Before asking commuters to abandon their cars, we must first improve mass transit capacity and reliability."

Advocates of the pay-to-drive plan say it would ease the drive of those who decide to pay the toll and improve mass transit options for those who don't. Mayor de Blasio and Sen. Michael Gianaris (D-Queens) have proposed instituting a millionaire's tax to cover additional subway costs.

COUGH IT UP II: THE RECKONING

In addition to congestion pricing, Gov. Cuomo wants to tag the city with half the bill for emergency subway repairs and cover the full \$18 billion cost of the Metropolitan Transit Authority's (MTA's) 5-year capital budget. City-dollars — subway and bus fares, taxes — comprise 70 percent of MTA revenue and the city has already committed \$2.5 billion to the capital budget, more than it ever has in the past.

Under Cuomo's proposal, the state would also seize property taxes from areas surrounding recent MTA devel-

HEAR THE ROAR

Between 1.9 and 2.6 million women and their supporters marched Jan. 20–21 in 407 cities in all 50 states for the second annual Women's March. In New York, as many as 200,000 demonstrators filled Columbus Circle and adjacent streets before marching through Midtown. Donald Trump's election has spurred record numbers of women to run for elected office. Two women candidates — Jessica Ramos and Alessandra Biaggi — recently announced they are mounting primary challenges against incumbent Dems who have helped the GOP maintain control of the State Senate. Ramos, a former union staffer has left her job at City Hall to take on Jose Peralta in Queens while Biaggi, a former Hillary Clinton advisor is gunning for the Bronx-Westchester district that belongs to Jeff Klein — recently accused of forcibly kissing a female staffer.

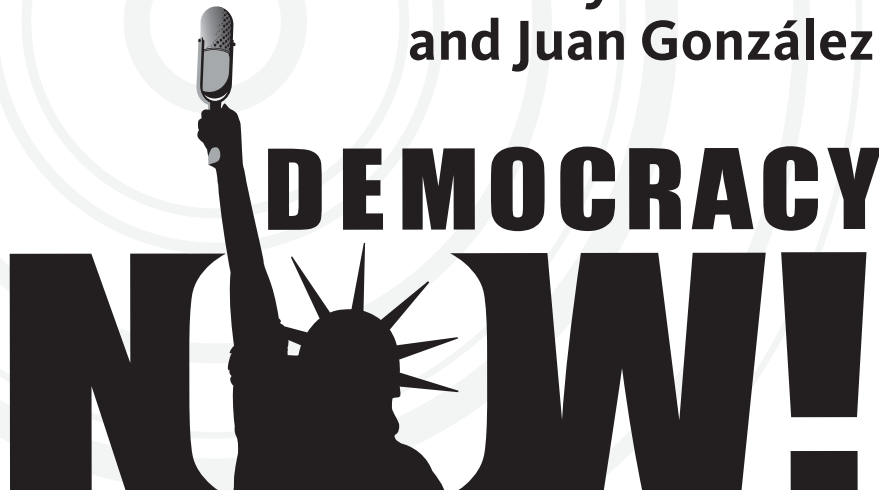
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Voting is one small but important way to be politically active. In 2018, New York will hold party primaries for federal offices on June 26 and for state offices on September 11. General elections will be on Nov. 6. For voter registration information, visit the NYC Board of Elections at www.vote.nyc.ny.us.

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February 2018 THE INDEPENDENT

RATS IN THE HALLWAY

WORKING CLASS WOMEN OF COLOR AND YOUNG WHITE SOCIALISTS JOIN FORCES AGAINST A PRIVATE EQUITY SLUMLORD

BY GEORGIA KROMREI

“The rats just tore the grate open,” Marie Miranda tells me, pointing to a large hole outside her building at 231 East 117th Street in East Harlem. “I see them coming out of there all the time.” The thick metal slab is bent back despite, she said, multiple repairs by the building’s residents.

It was late August, and Marie, a 66-year-old former salsa dancer and waitress, and I had just come from a tenants union meeting held in the back offices of Manhattan Legal Services. Eight tenants from 231 East 117th met to discuss strategies for confronting the building’s owner, Emerald Equity, a private equity firm, and doing something about their horrendous living conditions.

Emerald Equity and the company it hired to oversee the six-story walkup, ArchRock Management, was harassing undocumented tenants, threatening to call Immigration and Customs Enforcement if they complained, and forcing many to move out. There had been no hot water in the building since Aug. 1, and the gas had been shut off July 1. Some tenants had been without gas for nearly a year — the result of unpermitted construction in seven recently vacated apartments, which workers were converting to luxury homes.

The tenants had recently formed a union and filed a lawsuit against 231 E 117 LLC, the limited liability corporation that serves as a shell for Emerald Equity. They discussed a rent strike, seeking rent abatements and how to reach residents of other buildings owned by the company, in the hopes of forming a coalition. In the months that followed, their organizing efforts would provide a glimpse into both the potential of tenant-led struggles against gentrification and the nitty-gritty challenges facing them — at a time when profit-seeking investors are trying to drive out tenants in many of New York City’s 900,000 rent-stabilized apartments.

• • •

231 EAST 117TH is one of the 47 East Harlem buildings that comprise the “Dawnay Day portfolio.” They were built between 1900 and 1961. By 1980, when Steven Kessner, the son of a taxi driver from the Bronx, began consolidating the portfolio, white flight, redlining, crime and a drop in city services had led to a sharp decline in property values, and scores of buildings were abandoned. Kessner bought up entire lots at a time. He purchased one lot in 1981 for just \$15,500.

Most of the apartments in the portfolio were rent-stabilized — a form of rent regulation New York City enacted in 1969, which has since been taken over by the state. Rent-stabilized tenants have the right to renew their lease, can’t be evicted without a legal cause, are exempt from arbitrary rent increases and have the right to form a tenant union. However, their apartments can often be deregulated — often illegally — if they move out, which has led to widespread harassment by landlords.

By the time Kessner was done, he owned 47 buildings, housing more than 5,000 people. He saw himself as an entrepreneur, but tenants complained of freezing apartments, holes in the floors where rodents could move freely in and out of their homes, and a chronic lack of hot water.

Neighborhood groups led by Mexican immigrants and the Movement for Justice in El Barrio, the New York extension of the Zapatista movement, started

leading public protests against Kessner and suing him to win rent abatements. In 2007, burdened by numerous lawsuits and bad publicity, and unable to convert the units into high-rent luxury apartments fast enough to keep the portfolio profitable, Kessner sold the buildings to Dawnay Day, a British private equity firm.

Dawnay Day paid \$225 million for the 47 buildings. They then had 2,149 open violations of the city’s housing code, including lead-based paint hazards and broken windows. Still, it was an attractive investment. The firm planned to replicate a strategy that had been successful for them in London’s Brixton neighborhood, once home to bohemians and Caribbean immigrants: It would push out long-term, low-income tenants and renovate the buildings to deregulate the apartments and attract richer tenants who’d pay higher rents.

Dawnay Day began major renovations as a prelude to eventual mass evictions, but the financial crisis intervened. By September 2008, the firm was in bankruptcy. It sold off many of its holdings, including a \$34 million Lucian Freud painting and the East Harlem buildings.

In December 2016, after multiple changes of ownership, Emerald Equity bought the 47-building portfolio for \$375.5 million, with the aid of \$350 million from Brookfield Property Partners, an “alternative asset manager.”

The purchase price worked out to about \$317,000 per unit — relatively cheap by New York standards — but 96 percent of the units were rent-stabilized, with tenants paying well below the potential market rents for the area. Emerald Equity would never see a return on its investment if those people were allowed to stay.

The company picked up where its predecessors left off. It charged fees for routine maintenance or ceased performing maintenance at all, and began threatening undocumented tenants with calls to immigration authorities.

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BUILT IN 1910, 231 East 117th Street is one of the oldest buildings in the portfolio. Its red-brick facade casts a handsome image over the leafy street between Second and Third Avenues. Inside, the wide marble floors and spacious stairways that connect the building’s 35 apartments were surely once pristine. Now thick construction dust hangs in the air. Zippered plastic coverings, like body bags, shroud residents’ doors — a concession won by the tenants union to prevent the dust from entering apartments.

Marie moved to 231 East 117th in 1986, while the building was still owned by Kessner. She recalls those days when drug dealing was rampant in East Harlem and how, more than once, she saw dead bodies squirreled behind the building.

She doesn’t dance much anymore, but she still dreams of having a dance studio — not for herself but for her son, who has traveled as a backup dancer with Beyoncé and Missy Elliott. Her daughter is a social worker for Child Protective Services, and Marie often babysits her grandson

in the evenings when her daughter has to make house visits. She plans to leave her two-bedroom apartment to her son someday.

Before taking me on a tour of her building, Marie cooks me breakfast. I’m the second guest to visit her apartment in 15 years; the first was Alex Nicoll, her socialist upstairs neighbor. Her cat, Oreó, joins us. Marie is allergic to cats, but said she would rather live with a cat than the rats. She credits Oreó with keeping the vermin out of her apartment. She trained him to jump up through a hole in the wall to her son’s bedroom when she calls his name.

Some tenants had cautioned me about Marie. They said that she was loud and opinionated and could be somewhat abrasive. She didn’t disagree. Her loud nature is a source of pride and an emotional tool that she has used against her landlord.

“The reason they do anything for me is because I got a large mouth,” she said. “We got people together and we have a lawyer.”

On July 1, when the gas went off for the entire building, Marie started to collect cellphone numbers of people in the building and looped them into a group chat on WhatsApp. She and another tenant went to Manhattan Legal Services to ask them to intervene.

At a Sept. 28 town hall meeting in East Harlem, Marie got a chance to tell Mayor Bill de Blasio about her and her neighbors’ plight. The mayor said that officials from the Department of Buildings wouldn’t leave without talking to her. The next morning, inspectors from the department visited 231 East 117th St. and issued fines against Emerald Equity for the illegal construction. Marie and her neighbors celebrated, but didn’t stop making plans to keep organizing.

• • •

IN SEPTEMBER, three weeks after their first meeting at Manhattan Legal Services, the 231 East 117th tenants union met again, crowding into 4E, Alex Nicoll’s place.

Alex, originally from a bedroom community in Connecticut, moved into the building after graduating from Boston College with a degree in English and significant student loan debt. He took an entry-level job as a recruiter at a prominent financial firm, and

HOW TO DO A RENT STRIKE

Few sounds on earth are weaker than the feeble voice of one, so forming a tenants association greatly improves your chances of winning better conditions in your building. You can either do it on your own or with the aid of a community group such as the Crown Heights Tenant Union, Flatbush Tenants Coalition, CASA in the Bronx or the Cooper Square Committee in Manhattan — who can also connect you with other people in the neighborhood facing similar problems or have the same landlord.

The rent strike is a time-honored tactic, as it hits the landlord in the pocketbook. You tell your landlord that you are withholding all or part of your rent until there is adequate heat, broken windows are fixed, or whatever. You can also file an “HP action” demand that Housing Court order repairs, and try to win a rent abatement for the time you had these problems.

Rent strikes are legally risky, however, as

refusing to pay rent will almost certainly get you an eviction notice. It is a good idea to put your rent money in escrow, so the court knows you have it. Having a lawyer greatly increases your chances of success.

Computer technology has greatly increased the risks. As Housing Court cases are public records, companies have amassed lists of the tenants involved and sold them to landlords, who use them to blacklist suspected dead-beats and troublemakers. The state Office of Court Administration stopped selling individuals’ names in 2012, but it continues to provide a daily electronic feed of information on pending cases — and “it’s not hard” to match the case’s index number to the tenant’s name, lawyer Jamie Fishman said at the time.

— STEVEN WISHNIA





ISAAC LIPTZEN

moved into the East Harlem building with his cousin John.

The apartment's main attraction for him was its price. He didn't realize the building was rent-stabilized. He didn't know what rent stabilization was, but it was one of the few places he could afford. After moving in, however, Alex felt isolated from the community. He had no roots in East Harlem and didn't speak Spanish. "It was a strange space to be in," he told me. "I didn't really have a choice about moving to that apartment, but at the same time I make more money than some entire families."

Rents in the building vary widely. Marie Miranda pays \$840 a month. One newer tenant pays \$2,200 for an apartment with the same floor plan. She is undocumented and shares it with 10 other people, including four small children.

Alex and his two roommates pay nearly \$3,000. A few months after he moved in, their living room ceiling collapsed. No one was injured, and repairs were made quickly. Alex was relieved. But when he mentioned the incident to some of his neighbors, he learned that he was not the only one in the building whose ceiling had fallen in. More distressingly, he was the only one whose ceiling had been promptly fixed. Other tenants had had to wait weeks and even months.

Alex started talking more frequently with the other tenants and met Marie Miranda, whom he described as the building's "connective tissue." He also got in touch with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). Like many young people who were inspired by Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign, Alex joined DSA after the 2017 inauguration of Donald Trump. He paid dues but was not an active member. As conditions in his building grew worse, though, he turned to the organization for help.

DSA members provided the knowledge and expertise that Alex and his fellow tenants needed. Lawyers at Manhattan Legal Services didn't have time to teach tenants about the intricacies of rent-stabilization law, but the socialists did.

That night in September, 30 people packed into Alex's apartment. He served strong home-brewed beer. Marie offered guests pasta shells stuffed with ricotta cheese. Spirits were high, but as the meeting was about to begin, the sound of a loud scream filled the building. People streamed out to see what was happening. On the first floor, several tenants were contending with a rat. It was enormous and not scared of humans; ArchRock Management hadn't provided any extermination services, despite numerous requests. The rat had dropped down

several stories and jumped onto the pant leg of a tenant, who shook it off and chased it out of the building.

• • •

AS THE MEETING RESUMED, a disagreement broke out that was trivial to some and crucial to others.

As a temporary solution to the lack of gas, management had installed cheap electric stoves. Florencia Aguilar, from 4D, said the concession was granted too easily. She'd joined the tenant union over the issue of the gas, and thought the electric stoves would just be a temporary fix. She prefers cooking with gas, and worried about an increase in her monthly electric bill. She and several other female tenants threatened to leave the union if their concerns were not taken into consideration. But now that the stoves had been installed, it was difficult for the union to backtrack.

The argument underscored an uneasy boundary between Alex and his neighbors, which he and the DSA as an organization are struggling with. DSA is mostly white and majority-male. Its young, college-educated members are largely disconnected from the working-class communities of color they seek to empower. Their budget constraints are real, but they do not have the same stakes in the community as long time residents.

Here in East Harlem, DSA members are learning how to organize in spaces where the strongest protagonists are working-class women who often provide for their families through the use of their stoves. Those women were concerned that cooking on an electric stove is more expensive, and that they can't turn the heat up or down quickly. They also fretted that their children would singe their hands if they touched the hot coils on the burners.

"To me, the issue of the stoves didn't make much difference, but it's also certainly a gendered thing," Alex later reflected.

Walking through the building with Marie one day later in the fall, I perceived the unmistakable smell of burnt nopal cactus. We peered through an open apartment door, where two Hispanic women were wrestling with a smoking comal (a Mexican-style griddle) on the stove. Although outrage over the electric stoves has subsided, not everyone has gotten used to them.

That same day, Marie and I also managed to enter 5D, one of the empty units at the center of all the illegal construction. The door was open,



ISAAC LIPTZEN

GETTING ORGANIZED: Longtime residents of 231 E. 117th St. and members of the Democratic Socialists of America meet and strategize after a shared dinner of cooked potato salad, *pastelillos* and rice.

UNAFRAID: "The reason [the landlord] does anything for me is because I got a large mouth," says Marie Miranda, a tenant leader who has lived at 231 E. 117th Street since 1986.

Continued on page 11

TURN UP THE HEAT ON YOUR LANDLORD

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

“We haven’t had heat for over a week,” says JoAnn Broaddus of the Bronx. “When it comes up, it only comes up for 15 minutes or half an hour. That’s not enough to warm up the apartment.”

Broaddus, a 67-year-old retired clothing-store manager, was one of about 40 tenants protesting outside 911 Walton Avenue and its twin, 923 Walton, on the evening of Jan. 24. The two, blocky U-shaped six-story buildings built in the 1920s on the ridge sloping down from the Grand Concourse to Yankee Stadium share a boiler. She lives on the sixth floor, and wonders if tenants lower down are any warmer.

They aren’t, according to Maria Santana, 63, who’s lived on the first floor for 22 years. “Muchas problemas con la calefacción,” she says. Speaking in Spanish through an interpreter from the local housing organization Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA), she says there’s no heat at all in the morning, and it comes on for maybe 15 minutes in the afternoon or evening.

“When there’s no heat, I can’t even sleep in my room,” she says. She has to go into a room that doesn’t have a window and use an electric heater.

New York City law requires that from Oct. 1 to May 31, all building owners must provide tenants with enough heat to keep the inside temperature at least 68°F from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. if it’s below 55° outside. At night, the inside temperature must be at least 62°. This winter is the first heating season that stricter regulations enacted last year have been in effect; the old law only required heat overnight when the outside temperature was below 40°, and it didn’t have to be more than 55° inside.

The city Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) is responsible for enforcing the law. Tenants can call 311 to complain if there’s no heat or hot water in their apartment or building. When they do, HPD tries to notify the building’s owner or manager, and may also try to contact tenants to see if the heat’s back on. If it isn’t, the agency will send an inspector.

From Oct. 1 to Jan. 16, HPD says it received more than 61,000 separate complaints about lack of heat. Its 217 inspectors have tried to check out complaints more than 63,000 times, about one-fourth of its total attempted inspections during that period.

Lack of heat or hot water is an “immediately hazardous” Class C violation, which must be corrected “immediately.” If the landlord doesn’t, HPD can issue fines of \$250 to \$500 a day for the season’s first offense, and \$500 to \$1,000 a day for a second offense. It can also hire a private contractor through its Emergency Repair Program to fix the boiler or deliver fuel, billing the costs to the landlord.

Last winter, HPD received more than 109,000 separate complaints that resulted in 3,449 inadequate-heat violations. It charged landlords \$1.8 million for heat-related emergency repairs, and collected a similar amount in civil penalties.

The problem with the system, says lawyer Gregory Baltz of the Urban Justice Center, is that “when a landlord structures

their heating system so the boiler goes off and on,” the heat can be back on by the time the inspectors come. Maria Santana says the heat at 911 Walton Avenue came on for about two days after HPD issued a violation earlier in January, but then went back to being on for only 15 minutes a day.

At 911 Walton, HPD records posted online show that tenants complained about the heat on eight days in December and seven in January, including four out of five days during the New Year’s cold wave. But the building has no outstanding heat violations: The conditions earlier in the month were found to have been corrected, and the complaints from Jan. 20 and Jan. 24 were still open as of Jan. 25. At 923 Walton Avenue, tenants complained on four days in December and nine in January, including five days in a row from Jan. 4 to Jan. 8. It has four Class C no-heat violations outstanding, based on complaints from Nov. 27 and Jan. 8. HPD found the Jan. 15 and 16 complaints corrected. The one from the Jan. 19 is still open.

The tenants of the two buildings filed an “HP action” in mid-January, demanding that a Housing Court judge order the landlord to provide adequate heat and hot water.

Another problem is that not all tenants can complain safely. Those who live in apartments that aren’t rent-stabilized have no legal right to renew their leases, so they have a strong incentive not to make trouble for their landlords. Mexican-born tenants at 1231 Broadway in Bushwick, a building with chronic heat problems, say their landlord regularly threatens to call immigration if they complain.

Lack of heat often goes along with other problems in a building. HPD lists 152 outstanding violations at 923 Walton Avenue, including leaks, mold, broken floors, defective electrical outlets, and peeling lead paint — the last accounting for most of the 23 Class C violations.

What galls the two buildings’ tenants is that their landlord is getting rent increases for major capital improvements. At 911 Walton Avenue, the state has approved an increase of \$13.39 per room per month for elevator repairs. That means Martha Marin, who says she’s already spending half her income as a school office assistant on her \$1,562 rent, will have to pay \$54 more.

“It’s ridiculous,” says JoAnn Broaddus. “I’m cold. I’m too old for this.”



STEVEN WISHNIA



STEVEN WISHNIA

OUT IN THE COLD:

Tenants at 911 and 923 Walton Ave. in the South Bronx rallied on Jan. 24 to demand adequate heat and hot water for their apartments.

FRUSTRATED:

Maria Santana has only had sporadic heat this winter even as her landlord received state permission to increase the rents in her building.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you’re not getting adequate heat or hot water, the Metropolitan Council on Housing, a citywide tenants-rights group, recommends that you take four steps.

First, call the city Central Complaints Bureau at 311 immediately to complain. Keep a detailed record of your complaint reference number, and if you’re going to be out during the day, have a neighbor or friend be available to let the city inspector into your apartment — inspectors often show up unannounced.

Second, get other tenants in your building to call 311—at least once every day, until the condition is corrected.

Third, write and call the landlord to demand that the heat or hot water be turned on immediately. Send letters by certified mail, return receipt requested, and keep copies for yourself, so they can be used as evidence in court.

Fourth, buy a good indoor/outdoor thermometer and keep a log of the exact dates, times and temperature readings, both inside and outside.

If the lack of heat or hot water persists, organize the other tenants to file an HP action to demand that Housing Court order repairs.

— STEVEN WISHNIA

RATS IN THE HALLWAY

Continued from page 10

the recessed lighting on. It was lunchtime, and the construction workers had left their gear leaning against the wall.

The living room and one bedroom had been enlarged and divided into a dining area and kitchen, with mauve walls and grey wood floors. The kitchen was equipped with stainless-steel appliances, including a dishwasher and an enormous black glass-top oven. There was a separate cabinet with a washer and a dryer, and the bathroom had a modern toilet and a new shower stall with a glass door. It was another world compared with the other apartments in the building.

• • •

ALEX NICOLL STARTED the Dec. 10 tenant union meeting by reading a chapter in Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* about tenant uprisings in the Hudson Valley in the 1830s. As he read in English from his laptop screen, a neighbor uneasily translated the dense text about a showdown between a sheriff and his mounted posse of 500 against 1,800 tenant farmers who refused to pay rent.

"That's exactly what we need," Olga Piña, a 20-year building resident, interjected. "Where's our 1,800? Why isn't everyone here at these meetings?"

Olga later told the group that many Hispanic tenants have not joined the union due to either a miscommunication or a misunderstanding about who can take part. They said that Johnson Atkinson, the lawyer from Manhattan Legal Services who is representing them in their suit against Emerald Equity and ArchRock Management, told them they needed a Social Security number in order to be a client.

"He said to me: 'I only defend legal people,'" Olga said.

Another Hispanic tenant confirmed Olga's account. This was met by dismay from the other tenants.

Atkinson did not return multiple requests for comment.

The tenants agreed to set the record straight both with Atkinson, and with the Spanish-speaking tenants reluctant to participate in the union. You don't have to be a citizen or have a green card to join a tenants' union or take part in a rent strike. Landlords are bound by leases regardless of their tenants' immigration status.

"You mean I can tell my people they can come to the meetings?" Olga whispered to Marie in Spanish.

Next on the agenda was the issue of non-payment notices. All of the tenants involved in the rent strike had received calls in the last week threatening them with eviction if they did not pay up. Several tenants voiced their commitment to remaining on strike. It would give their lawsuit for repairs more leverage. Others wavered.

"I don't necessarily want a nonpayment notice on my record," said Alex.

The tenants agreed to postpone their deci-

sion. There was a more pressing item on the agenda. Marie had complained to ArchRock that the building's porter was not taking out the garbage or cleaning the halls, and that she suspected him of dealing drugs across the street. In the hallway outside her home, he'd told her she had better watch her back. No one in the tenant union trusts the police to help. The union instead appealed to the DSA to provide Marie with volunteer escorts while she walks home from her daughter's place late at night.

"I feel responsible," said Alex. "Just giving her a can of pepper spray isn't enough."

• • •

ON JAN. 28, Marie Miranda cooked potato salad, pastelillos and rice for a group of 30 socialists and Emerald Equity tenants gathered in Alex's apartment for the DSA Housing Working Group meeting. The socialists came to hear the tenants' experiences, and tenants came to give powerful testimony of landlord abuse. There was standing room only as people crowded into the living room and leaned in from the kitchen to hear the tenants speak.

One by one, in Spanish, the tenants gave harrowing accounts of abuses spanning decades, including the death of one tenant's father due to management's negligence, lease renewal notices sent late, irregularities in rent histories, bathrooms without working sinks, mold and mildew, infestations of cockroaches and bedbugs, and the most recent eight-month period of construction, when ceilings collapsed pipes burst and tenants were frequently left without basic services.

Tenants also voiced frustration at the pace and limitations of the lawsuit. Lawsuits move slowly, and while progress is being made on getting rent abatements for several of the most affected tenants, cockroaches infest many of the apartments. The super was away in Venezuela, so no one was cleaning the building. In December, the Fire Department was called when an electric stove caught fire. On Jan. 24, the hot water went out in the whole building after a pipe burst in one of the newly renovated — and now rented-out — apartments.

Emerald Equity, ArchRock Management and Brookfield Property did not respond to requests for comment. A letter from Con Edison shows that the owners owe \$10,000 in electric bills. The Buildings Department issued seven Environmental Control Board violations in September, which are still outstanding. No one from the landlord showed up at the hearing to dispute the violations, and the unpaid fines now total \$10,580. There is a stop-work order posted on the front door of the building.

Meanwhile, in December the City Council approved a de Blasio-backed rezoning plan for East Harlem that will allow for the construction of high-rise towers. The new market-rate apartments coming are expected to greatly increase the gentrification pressures in the neighborhood.

[End of Year Giving]

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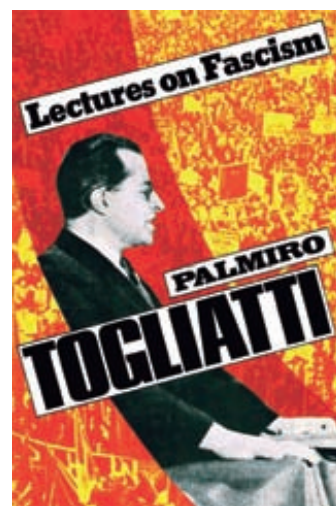
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\$700 BILLION FOR WHAT?

HOW RUNAWAY MILITARY SPENDING KEEPS US FROM MEETING OUR REAL NEEDS

BY MARK HAIM

In recent years the peace movement has often felt like a neglected stepchild, largely ignored by many left-liberal groups. It seems that ending war and militarism is just not on their agenda. When the Women's March was organized at the time of Trump's inauguration, opposition to war was not on their radar. Although it was added to the mission statement, it's received little attention and is not among the eight Unity Principles on their website. And among many politicians otherwise deemed "progressive" we've seen no sense of urgency regarding ending the "endless war" or even for beating some swords into plowshares.

Of course it wasn't always this way. During the later years of the Bush Administration the Iraq War became an albatross around the neck of the GOP. Many citizens were deeply opposed to the war, therefore a goodly number of Democratic politicians, including Barack Obama, made ending the U.S. role in Iraq a significant plank in their platforms.

But Obama's opposition to the Iraq War did not represent a broader rejection of U.S. militarism and the military-industrial complex (MIC) that President Eisenhower warned the nation against back in 1961. Obama, in spite of his Nobel Peace Prize, dramatically escalated drone warfare; surged troops to Afghanistan; bombed seven predominantly Muslim nations; intervened in Libya, Syria, Somalia and numerous other countries, and initiated a trillion-dollar nuclear weapons modernization program.

The lack of meaningful progress on the peace front during Obama's eight years in office is really no surprise. There has been a continuity of support for global hegemony throughout the entire post-WWII era. While there have been a outliers here and there, the mainstream of both major parties has supported massive military budgets and the dominant presence of the U.S. military on every continent, in every ocean, in the skies, in outer space and in the cyber realm. The military calls this "Full Spectrum Dominance."

During the Cold War, the supposed threat of Communism was the justification for super-sized budgets and a continuous stream of wars and interventions—some overt, others covert or proxy—none of which had anything to do with defending the United States—and none of which ended in victory. These were sold to the American people as being fought to "defend freedom" or "support democracy."

After the Cold War ended it became more difficult to justify such a massive military. Post-9/11 the sup-

posed need to fight a "war on terror" became the rationale, although the supposed enemy was a ragtag non-state actor with no territory, no military assets and only a handful of fighters. What was never acknowledged was the reality that the growth in so-called "Islamist terror groups" was largely blowback—the result of and reaction to U.S. intervention in the region.

MANY LEFT-LIBERAL GROUPS IGNORE THE PENTAGON'S SWOLLEN BUDGET EVEN AS IT DEVOURS RESOURCES THAT COULD BE PUT TO MUCH BETTER USE.

ENTER DONALD TRUMP

While the left was appalled by the positions Trump took on virtually all issues, his neo-isolationist campaign rhetoric led some to believe that perhaps he'd be less interventionist than Hillary Clinton. Unfortunately, the President is quite different from Trump on the stump. He has surrounded himself with generals and repeatedly threatened to blow North Korea off the face of the Earth.

Trump campaigned on the bogus claim that the U.S. military was "depleted," and, in office, he has pushed massive increases in the Pentagon budget. Sadly, a bipartisan majority in Congress gave him all he asked for than then some. The administration had requested upping the military budget for fiscal year 2018 (FY18) to \$668 billion, an increase of \$57 billion from the FY17 appropriation of \$611 billion. Congress ended up authorizing \$700 billion, adding \$32 billion to the Pentagon's request. The Senate vote was 89 to eight, with most Democrats joining their GOP colleagues in showering extra billions on the military.

It is worth noting that, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the FY17 appropriation exceeded the military spending of the next eight largest spenders combined, six of which are U.S. allies. And the increase means that in 2018 U.S. taxpayers will be footing the bill for a

military that costs more than the next 11 top spenders combined. Note, too, the "military budget," which devours more than half of all discretionary federal spending, does not include the CIA, Veterans Administration, military disabilities and many other expenses.

THE COMPLEX

So, why is the MIC ascendant in the USA? Who benefits

and how?

While a definitive answer is hard to pin down, a few possibilities, not mutually exclusive, include: A dominant military position goes hand in glove with the control of global financial institutions; it backs up control of resources, markets and labor in less developed countries by U.S. and transnational corporations. Geopolitical dominance assures the ability to intervene at will in conflicts, either directly, as in Libya, or by proxy, as in Yemen, or both, as in Syria.

Continued on page 20



GARY MARTIN

BY THE NUMBERS

\$611 BILLION 2017 U.S. military budget.

\$700 BILLION 2018 U.S. military budget.

\$595 BILLION Total 2016 military spending of China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, India, France, U.K., Japan and Germany.

\$89 BILLION Increase in U.S. military spending from 2017 to 2018.

\$75 BILLION Estimated cost of implementing nationwide free public college tuition as proposed by Bernie Sanders.

SOURCES: STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE, BERNIESANDERS.COM

PROTEST

J20 TRIALS TO RESUME

FEDS TARGET 59 REMAINING DEFENDANTS

BY INDEPENDENT STAFF

On Jan. 18, the government announced it was dropping charges against 129 people swept up in mass arrests while protesting Donald Trump on Inauguration Day 2017.

"I'm glad it's over," Adam Simpson, one of the defendants who had expected to attend a pretrial hearing the following day in Washington, D.C., told *The Independent*.

There was cause for celebration for those whose charges were dismissed, as well as the six defendants who were acquitted by a jury in December. Yet, in a statement, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia said it would continue to pursue a case against the remaining 59 defendants, the "core group that we believe is most responsible for the destruction and violence that took place on Inauguration Day."

"This is a victory, but the fight is far from over," said Sam Menefee-Libey, a member of the Dead City Legal Posse, which has provided housing and mutual aid to the defendants. "The U.S. Attorney's Office continues to zealously prosecute many who were protesting a proto-fascist president and the solidarity among defendants and supporters remains strong."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jennifer Kerkhoff originally sought convictions against 234 people in relation to the Inauguration Day protest on charges that carry decades in prison, including "conspiracy to riot." Thirteen individuals accepted lesser plea deals but dozens of defendants refused and government has already spent millions prosecuting the alleged rioters for what, by its own admission, amounts to \$100,000 in property damage.

For the most part, prosecutors appear to be grasping at straws. They have cited the dark clothing demonstration attendees wore as proof of a conspiracy and last year sought the IP addresses of 1.3 million internet users who visited the protest's website,

a request it dropped in August when the site's host pushed back.

In recent court filings, the government says it is now targeting "defendants who: (1) engaged in identifiable acts of destruction, violence, or other assaultive conduct; (2) participated in the planning of the violence and destruction; and/or (3) engaged in conduct that demonstrates a knowing and intentional use of the black-bloc tactic on January 20, 2017, to perpetrate, aid or abet violence and destruction."

Those still slated to stand trial include journalist (and former *Indy* contributor) Aaron Cantú. Attorneys for Cantú, who attended the demonstration as a reporter, are seeking to have the charges against him dropped on First Amendment grounds.

The remaining defendants pros-

A TOTAL OF 21 TRIALS ARE PLANNED.

ecuted in a series of trials, mainly in groups of at least four. The next trial is expected to begin in March, with prosecutions stretching into the fall. A total of 21 trials are planned.

"Every trial is a new universe," the presiding judge, Robert Morin, remarked at a Jan. 19 motion hearing.

At the same time, the American Civil Liberties Union is moving ahead with a lawsuit against the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department for excessive use of force on Inauguration Day. Demonstrators were kettled, pepper-sprayed and, according to the lawsuit, denied food, water and bathroom access for several hours. Two plaintiffs accuse officers of subjecting them to unnecessary rectal searches in order to humiliate them.



DAVID HOLLENBACH

US POLITICS IN AN AGE OF UNCERTAINTY

Edited by Lance Selfa

Essays on a New Reality

"This brilliant collection shows how the dismal neoliberalism of the corporate Democrats combined with the dark genius of the right to put a malignantly narcissistic, racist, sexist, and nativist white-nationalist mogul in the White House. The contributors point the way to an independent and genuinely Left politics beyond what contributor Nancy Fraser rightly calls 'the Hobson's choice between reactionary populism and progressive neoliberalism.'"

—PAUL STREET, author, *They Rule: The 1 Percent v. Democracy*

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- What is the "freeze for a freeze" proposal?
- What is the Olympic Truce?

Juyeon JC Rhee, is a first generation Korean immigrant grassroots organizer. Rhee has worked for decades on demilitarization, peace and unification in Korea. She's a Board member of **Nodutdol for Korean Community Development**, and of the **Korea Policy Institute**.

William (Bill) Hartung, is Director of the **Arms and Security Project at the Center for International Policy**. His articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Nation*, and the *World Policy Journal*. Hartung has appeared regularly on CBS 60 Minutes, NBC Nightly News, the *Lehrer Newshour*, and more.



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FEAR OF A BLACK PLANET

UNDER THE REPUBLICAN PUSH FOR WELFARE CUTS, RACISM BOILS

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

“Never tell anyone,” my mother hissed, “that we’re on welfare!” I sputtered, “Okay.” She let go, angrily. People shuffled to the window where a tired man scanned their papers. That was 1982. Passing a poster of President Ronald Reagan, she shot him the middle finger. Later, I realized he’d risen to power by branding women like her “welfare queens.”

In late 2017, Donald Trump smiled as the GOP passed its Tax Cuts and Jobs Bill. The Republicans want to slash Medicaid, food stamps and welfare. The deficit their tax bill created will be used to justify that. Yet, why attack the needy? In American conservatism, the internal enemy of the nation is the idle poor — specifically, the poor of color.

Republicans talk of prosperity, dignity and self-reliance. Peel back the rhetoric, and racism boils underneath. Tax cuts and calls to end welfare are dog whistles for white supremacy. The real effect of their policies is that people will suffer and thousands will die as they fall through gaping holes in the safety net.

DEADLY MATH

Every day, I see homeless people ask for money. Every. Day. On the street or lurching in a train, they shake cups for loose coins. Most of us look away. A few give wrinkled bills. Many wince with disgust — mostly, I think, because we’re afraid of becoming them. We already live such precarious lives.

How do we justify poverty in a land of abundance? The U.S. is the wealthiest nation in history. The annual federal budget is nearly \$3.5 trillion. All of us pour into it. Our paychecks are slivered. Corporations cough up cash. Even undocumented workers pay taxes. Yet, out of 326 million people, 43.1 million live in poverty.

In the Deep South, Midwestern Rust Belt towns and public housing all over the nation, people cling to food stamps and Medicaid. These needed programs lie on the Republican chopping block. President Trump has pushed drug testing for food stamps and work requirements for Medicaid. Rep. Paul Ryan wants to cut Social Security and Medicare.

Again, why attack the most vulnerable? Maybe it’s because the poor vote less. When they do, they vote for Democrats. Maybe it’s because Republicans — like all of us — don’t see just with their eyes, but also with their ideology.

The GOP is led by a business elite that does not have a natural base. Since the 1970s, it has allied with Christian evangelicals, jingoists and racists to ride reactionary movements to power. It fuses our class and racial hierarchies to cut off interracial, working-class solidarity. It is kept going by feeding its voting base with political “red meat” via Fox News and other right-wing outlets, which channel resentment at immigrants, the poor and especially, the poor of color.

The GOP employs a Manichean ideology with two poles, opposed but bound together. On one end, there is the “job creator,” who comes off like Hercules in a business suit. He

is smart, decisive and a straight, white male. “I will be the greatest job producer that God ever created,” Trump promised. He is exhibit one on how privilege warps self-image. In a Mar-a-Lago portrait he commissioned, our president looks like Alexander the Great crossed with Fabio.

On the other end, conservatives see the poor as expecting handouts for nothing. Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) recently said, “I have a rough time wanting to spend ... trillions of dollars to help people who won’t help themselves ... and expect the federal government to do everything.” He was followed by Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa), who wanted to repeal the estate tax because the rich invest, unlike the poor who “are just spending every darn penny they have, whether it’s on booze or women or movies.”

The modern GOP thinks the poor are parasites, an idea inherited from older conservatives, schooled in social Darwinism and eugenics. It is deeply familiar. I’ve known this rhetoric my whole life because it was aimed at me.

WHEN NONWHITE MEANS NON-HUMAN

“Blacks are lazy.” “Blacks complain.” “Blacks always want a handout.” I heard it all before and hated it. My mom came home, bone-tired from work. My aunts, uncles and friends were wrung dry from work. I was always told to work “twice as hard.” We were running from a stereotype: the “parasite coon.”

Racism bends vision into preset images. The underlying spectrum is from fully human whites to animalistic nonwhites. At the bottom, in the right-wing worldview, Africans are still framed as monkeys: bestial, lustful and stupid.

The white racial imagination changes with the level of control over Black people. In the Antebellum era, the Southern planter class promoted the docile Black as proof of slavery’s beneficence. “Mammy” happily served her master. “Uncle Tom” happily served his master. “Sambo” did too. They were portrayed as pets, kept by a superior race.

After the smoke of the Civil War cleared, the white racial imagination, fueled by fear of free Black people, created more menacing imagery. The rapist, Black male brute was a threat. The wanton Black Jezebel was a threat. The “coon” was a sambo gone bad; he was lazy, cynical and mean.

“Bad” Black images rose with white fear. The Black Codes were written with the pen of white panic. The Ku Klux Klan rode at night to kill freedmen and reclaim the land. As the Radical Republicans sent troops to guard Black voting rights, property and bodies, former Confederates hated federal soldiers for forcing racial equality. “States’ rights” transformed into a call to arms for white supremacy.

In 1877, a deal to resolve the disputed presidential election of 1876 ended Reconstruction. Federal troops left the South. White militias killed, raped and beat Black people who tried to vote. Southern “Redemption” had begun — a political cycle of Black freedom confronted by white backlash. It used “bad” Black imagery like the Brute or Parasite Coon. It was violent. It spoke the language of states’ rights and small government.

D.W. Griffith romanticized this terror in the

1915 film *Birth of a Nation*. In it, Gus, a Black federal soldier — a brute — tries to rape a white woman. In the state-house scene, Black elected officials put their dirty feet on desks; they eat chicken, drink, fight and act loutish. They were “coons” in power. The white audience cheered the Ku Klux Klan chasing them out to “redeem” the white man’s country.

I saw *Birth of a Nation* in a college film course, and, watching it, my chest tightened. Here was the myth that lay in the heart of the U.S. Here were the characters that racists saw when they looked at me, my family and friends.

BEWARE OF THE DOG WHISTLE

It is an iconic photo. I always wonder at it. In 1957, soldiers guarded nine Black teens walking to school in Little Rock, Arkansas. White Southerners spat slurs as if the civil-rights movement were a second Reconstruction. Eighty years after Northern occupation, federal troops were back in an attempt to force at least a semblance of Black equality.

Today, a memorial stands to the Little Rock Nine at the Arkansas state capitol. When they integrated the school, each step inside was a literal and symbolic trampling of open racism. Alongside African-Americans’ legal victories was a cultural one: White supremacy, if not defeated, was somewhat delegitimized.

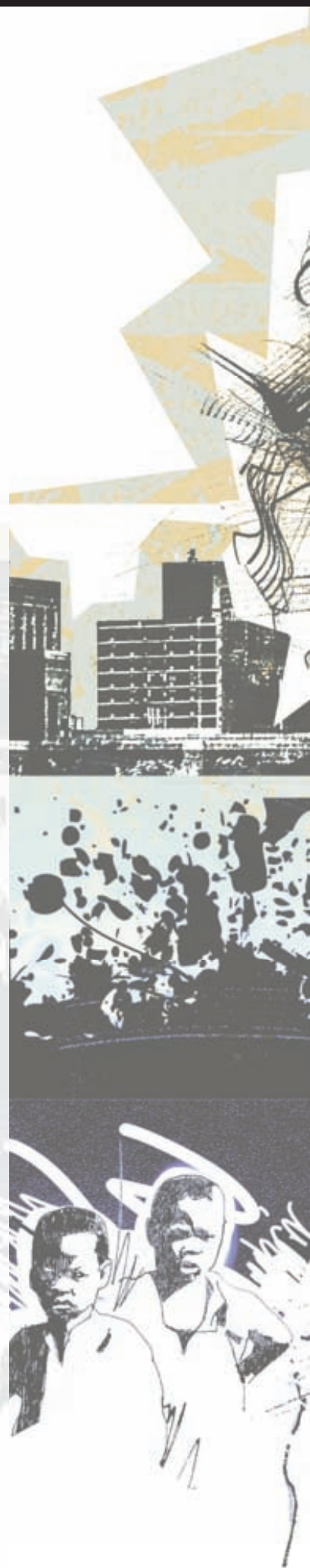
When the white backlash came, politicians could no longer speak in bald racism. Republicans, who were rebounding after decades of New Deal Democratic dominance, used a “Southern strategy” to corral racist Democrats. It cleaned up bigotry with euphemism.

Lee Atwater, a political strategist for Reagan and George H.W. Bush, spelled out the mechanics. “You start out in 1954 by saying, nigger, nigger, nigger,” he breezily instructed. “By 1968 you can’t say nigger. So, you say forced busing, states’ rights. You’re getting so abstract now that you’re talking about cutting taxes and a byproduct is Blacks get hurt worse than whites.” It was a cruel calculation. The Black poverty rate was higher and the need for social programs, greater.

So, when Richard Nixon called for “law and order,” the Republican voter heard “Blacks.” When Reagan praised states’ rights and attacked “welfare queens,” the Republican voter heard “Blacks.” When Bush hammered Democrat Michael Dukakis in 1988 with the infamous Willie Horton ad — Atwater’s baby — Republican voters saw “Blacks.”

Each political invocation of the “bad” Black, whether the parasite-coon, brute or baby-making Jezebel, heralded cuts to social programs. Poor Blacks got hurt worse than poor whites. They also got hurt with them. President Lyndon B. Johnson’s 1965-68 War on Poverty had saved millions of lives. What was not being saved was the idea of welfare itself. Republicans gave it a Black face, even though the majority of welfare recipients had been (and still are) white.

After campaigning against “welfare queens,” Reagan said in his 1981 inaugural address, “Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem.” He cut payments to the working poor, cut a million people





LYNNE FOSTER

off food stamps and cut job programs. He then gave tax breaks to the wealthy.

Fifteen years later, President Bill Clinton in his 1996 State of the Union speech said, “The era of big government is over.” Later that year, he signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act; it ended welfare as an entitlement, limited benefits and forced work requirements. He then repealed parts of the Glass-Steagall Act and let big Wall Street banks play in the markets.

In 2005, George W. Bush tried to privatize Social Security. He was stopped cold by Democrats and a disbelieving public.

The Republican strategy of displacing racism onto welfare and other social programs satisfied the GOP’s business elite. It did not help their base, who were trapped on both ends. Over them was a top-heavy GOP whose business leaders and donors were destroying the very social programs the white poor needed. At the other end, they were trapped by their own racial bias against “big government.”

What racist voters could not see in the footage of federal troops protecting Black children going to school in Little Rock was that the soldiers were not just protecting everyone’s right to attend public institutions. They were protecting the very possibility of having them.

FEAR OF A BLACK PLANET

“It’s not a bigger government we need,” Barack Obama said in his 2013 State of the Union address. “It’s a smarter one.” I cringed as he spoke. The first Black President felt he had to soothe a public raised on the racial stigma of big government, assuring them that he wasn’t going to sell white people into slavery to pay off the federal debt.

Just a year before, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich launched a short-lived presidential candidacy by calling Obama “the most effective food-stamp president in American history.” He was asked about it and squirmed like an eel.

Months later, Pat Buchanan bellowed on TV, “Barack Obama is a drug dealer of welfare.” He contrasted him with candidate Mitt Romney’s work ethic. Romney was caught on a hot mic saying, “There are 47 percent of the people ... who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe government has a responsibility to care for them.”

Again, race works its magic between the lines. Again, the parasite coon is a shadow in the text. After Obama’s 2008 victory, fear of a Black planet became a rising rage. Black Democratic pollster Cornell Belcher noted on Roland Martin’s TV One show, “You saw a spike in racial aversion. ... Whites see it as we’re losing power to them.”

It was *Birth of a Nation* again, only this time, federal troops didn’t just attempt to force racial equality: They obeyed the commands of a Black President. Each news cycle brought fresh proof that the United States was slipping out of white hands. A Latina was on the Supreme Court. Confederate statues were torn down. Black people rioted and protested in the streets.

When Donald Trump glided down the escalator, he was a one-man Ku Klux Klan

coming to the rescue; he was the Redeemer of White Supremacy. He promised border walls. He promised “law and order.” He even promised to save Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security for the “deserving poor” — down-on-their-luck white people.

They needed it. Blatant white supremacy, left behind by global capitalism, had hit a nadir. Deaths of despair hit a heartland ruined by opioids and joblessness. Seeing no future, they turned to Trump — who, having no plan, turned to the GOP — who tried to “solve” this problem with a massive tax cut for the wealthy.

At this point, it doesn’t matter if this or that Republican is personally racist. They can toast marshmallows on a burning cross for all it matters. The GOP cannot credibly take a race-neutral position when its politics has been based on racism for the last 50 years. The effects of its policies are race-specific. And class-specific. And deadly.

We won’t see them, and we won’t know their names, but people will die. Quietly. Invisibly. Ten thousand of us will die. Former Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers analyzed the Congressional Budget Office report that 13 million people will leave Obamacare when the individual mandate is repealed. He said on CNBC, “When people lose health insurance, they’re less likely to get preventive care, defer health care they need, and they’re more likely to die.”

Ten thousand. Ten thousand. I repeat it. Not just a number. It’s someone shaking with fever. It’s someone fighting for breath. It’s getting a phone call that someone you loved died, far away and alone because they couldn’t afford treatment.

How many people have they killed? On my laptop, a video plays of the GOP cheering the tax bill. I turn it off, go outside and see a line of people waiting for free food at my neighborhood church. Old men, workers, a neighbor I know, all wait with carts. A mother stands with them, trying to hold two squirming kids. She’s tired. I look at her and see across 30 years to my childhood and the moment I learned to be silent.

Nicholas Powers is a professor of African American literature at SUNY Old-Westbury and author of The Ground Beneath Zero (Upset Press, 2013). This article originally appeared at truth-out.org.

THE CHAMP!

COMEDIAN JUDAH FRIEDLANDER SPILLS THE BEANS ON TAYLOR SWIFT, HIS BARBIE DOLL & U.S. IMPERIALISM

BY PETER RUGH

You might have seen him at this year's Women's March in January: A large man with a shaggy beard, long, unruly hair, the brim of a trucker hat covering his eyes and a Barbie doll in his hands. Look a little closer — that Barbie is carrying a miniature sign. "Sexism & racism are two ingredients of capitalism," it reads, and the man holding the dolly is none other than stand-up comic Judah Friedlander, aka Frank Rossitano of the long-running sitcom, "30 Rock."

"Activist Barie" is an ongoing Instagram art project, Friedlander explains, using humor to get more people to feel more comfortable with dissent. The comedian, whose special "America is the Greatest Country in the United States" is currently available on Netflix, dropped by *The Indy* offices recently for a wide-ranging conversation on why this country is so fucked-up, fighting back and being a world champion.

PETER RUGH: *Tell us about your new stand-up special.*

JUDAH FRIEDLANDER: It's a documentary performance of stand-up shows that I did over multiple nights in small venues, mostly the Comedy Cellar here in New York. I made it 100 percent on my own. No outside financiers or producers and I did it on a very low budget. It's filmed in black and white. I wanted it to sort of look like a Jim Jarmusch film from the early '80s or like a punk rock hand-held video. I've watched specials over the years and, for the most part, I've never liked the way they were filmed. They're always very high tech. There's crane shots, all kinds of, you know, smoke machines. Stand-up is a simple art form. It's kind of like jazz in that sense. And I think it should be filmed in a very simple way.

Content-wise, it's all satire on American exceptionalism. It's called "America is the Greatest Country in the United States" and you can't argue with that. It deals with all the major issues of government oppression and hypocrisy — racism, sexism, imperialism, fascism. I've been doing stand-up since 1989 and I've always liked trying to find comedy in really serious areas where you wouldn't think it would exist.

I loved your bit about Taylor Swift and the tourism slogan "Welcome to New York."

We're the only city whose slogan is sarcastic. Taylor Swift has a song called "Welcome to New York" and when that came out the city made her some kind of official tourism ambassador. But when she sings "welcome to New York" it's not done in a sarcastic way. It's done in a friendly, open-hearted way. I think she doesn't understand New York is what I'm saying.

It's emblematic of how the city has changed.

Today, so much of New York just feels like this giant, dull, slowly creeping corporate oppression. From the chain stores everywhere to the skyrocketing rents and cost of living, it's this

blandness encroaching in from every angle and you just feel it. So I think it's more important than ever to fight back.

When did you become political?

I've always been interested in human rights and I did a lot of cartoons and comic strips when I was a kid. When I was 11 I did one about the Lech Walesa and Polish workers' rights. I remember my dad reading the paper and him screaming at it or seeing stuff on TV and just screaming at it. I was raised to really be skeptical and critical, and think and analyze and look at things from different perspectives, not just your own.

About seven or eight years ago, I started doing shows overseas in Europe, mostly England but other countries too. I thought, "I'm going to go to these countries and will learn a lot about them," which I did — but I really learned more about my own culture. It's kind of like if you're in a bad relationship, and whoever your partner is, they're not good to you. All your friends are like, "Why are you with this person? They're horrible to you." You can't see it because you're so wrapped up in them. Then a few years go by, you're not in that relationship anymore and now you have perspective and you can see it.

That's sort of like what going to Europe was for me, where I'm like, "Okay, I'm not so wrapped up in the U.S. system. I'm outside it and I can look at it from a distance and be able to analyze it a little better."

How does your material play overseas?

Great. They know we're a very powerful country when it comes to money and military power. Other countries pay attention to us. Despite all of our problems we've got to remember we're a very entertaining country. No matter how bad things are, it's pretty entertaining. Some people here watch reality shows for that train wreck mentality. That's how they watch our news. Our news is their reality show.

We're taught in school and if you turn on the news and listen to a Democrat politician or Republican politician, they all say the same thing: America is the greatest country in the world. Not only that, they say America is the greatest country in the history of the world. And then they'll always say whenever someone is running for president that we're here to elect the leader of the free world. I always wondered how come no other country gets to vote for the leader of the free world? Well, it must be because we're the greatest country. The other countries don't deserve to vote for the leader of the free world.

Your comedy parodies that attitude.

Yeah, and I think that creates a lot of problems because if you're taught this is the greatest country, we're number one, we're the best but you're struggling through life, you can barely make rent, etc., then you must think, "Well, there must be a glitch. There must be somebody we should blame for this." So people get taught, "Oh it's those immigrants that are messing up this country, otherwise we'd be perfect."

That's probably why we got Trump. This guy who's obsessed with winning.

Trump is terrible as a president and a person. But I think he's an appropriate president for the country, unfortunately. And you know this whole "world champion" persona that I do on stage satirizes that — this narcissism, this gloating and bragging about yourself. There's more layers to it but that's one of the themes. Trump is probably the most extreme example of a narcissist and of hate and all these things that exist in our country. Many people go through life trying to think that we don't have these ugly sides. But you do and if you don't acknowledge, you can't make it better.

One of the reasons Trump might win again is because so many people who don't like Trump view him as the only problem. They're like, "If we just get rid of Trump, everything's going to go back to normal and be perfect." Trump did not invent mass incarceration. He did not invent for-profit health care. We had all these problems before Trump. With him in office things are in danger of getting much, much worse. But the problems that we have he didn't start.

When you are president what are you going to do about New York's crumbling infrastructure?

We're not going to have more trains. We'll have longer buses. I'm going to build buses that are 30 miles long. That way, if your bus breaks down, you walk a mere 29 miles to your destination. There's no delays. It's a flawless plan. We'll get rid of the trains from the subway. Then, if we have flooding from the next hurricane, just canoe through the tunnels. That's why I keep telling people, "Practice your swimming." Swimming lessons are the key to surviving the future.

Looking back on your experience with "30 Rock," what stands out to you most?

First of all, my standup act is completely different than what I did on "30 Rock." A lot of my act and certainly this stand-up special, is satire on U.S. domestic and foreign policy and how imperialistic it is, as well as oppressive, and how, in many ways, it all basically stems from white supremacy and corporate supremacy and everything falling under those umbrellas.

But what was great about "30 Rock" is that it was a very well written show. They had tons of jokes and then the stories were actually funny. The writers were very good at both those two things: the storyline and the jokes, and how they intertwined and connected. They would write it and then they would rewrite it. They'd film and then they'd edit it and make it even tighter and tighter, so there was nothing extraneous.

You're working on new stand-up material now?

Yep, mostly just in New York. I'm usually doing about two to four shows a night, 15 minute sets. And then I'm doing hour-long sets, about once every two or three weeks at the Comedy Cellar, sometimes at The Stand. Then there's a couple little rooms in Brooklyn I do fairly often too.



DROPPING IN: Judah Friedlander during his recent visit to the Indy office at the Brooklyn Commons.

You prefer stand-up over acting.

I view acting as a part of filmmaking and I love filmmaking. It's a very different art than stand-up. Stand-up is immediate. When you make a movie, you get the idea, you write it down, and you get a budget, you look for locations, you look for actors, and then you film it all. From the time you had the idea to the time you screen it you've had to wait six months to find out if it's any good. With stand-up you find out within about one second. I like that immediacy, being there with the audience present and two feet from me. But I do love filmmaking too and yeah this year I will do some more acting stuff.

What's the role of comedy in these polarized times?

The country is at war and most people don't realize it. There are wars going on on many different levels. Even amongst the political right — the struggle for power from the white supremacist extremists to the religious extremists to the more sort of mainstream, corporate Republicans. And anything to the left of the Republicans, there's a war going on there too when you look at gender, when you look at race. In these times, art is extremely important, especially comedy.

I don't like telling people what to think but I like getting them to think. Most people are not dumb. Many people might have been misled or misguided but they're not dumb. Human beings in general are kind of hardwired to fear and to fear things that are different. If you get someone to laugh about something and it's something they're either against or don't even think about, they might actually start looking at it from a different angle. I'm kind of a pessimist but I'm a fighter. It's important to try to fight with love not with hate.

Where does "Activist Barbie" fit into all this?

It's a sort of on-and-off art project on Instagram. It's a little Barbie doll and I take her to Black Lives Matter protests, anti-nuclear war with North Korea protests. I find the mainstream media, in general, hates protests. They usually never cover them and if they do it's usu-

ally because some violence broke out. Whoever owns the news, they don't want people protesting that much. And unfortunately it's a very small minority of the population that protests. So I take Activist Barbie to protests and use a little humor to hopefully get people to say, "Okay, well, this looks different than what I saw on the news and maybe maybe this would be good to go to."

The other angle of Activist Barbie is that it's about sticking up for people and fighting for people's rights who may not look exactly like you. If only black people are fighting the oppression of black people, the chance of progress is very small. Everyone needs to stick up for everyone. If only gay people are fighting for gay people, what does that say about humanity? People should look at everyone as brothers and sisters and if there's one particular group that's getting oppressed, everybody should be fighting for their rights.

And what's with the "world champion" attire?

The "World Champion" stuff started out as just making fun of the show-offs, the braggarts. When Facebook came around, it started morphing into a subversive comment on narcissism in society in general. I used to do all these jokes about these ridiculous athletic achievements and would be quite humble and modest, like "Actually, I'm a real-life superhero. Isn't that amazing?"

But, if you break it down, the World Champion, is a champion of and for the world and for the rights of all the humans and animals and plants and the atmosphere and water in the world. The World Champion is someone who who fights for the rights of the people on the planet, as well as being a phenomenal athlete.

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KHRUANGBIN: AN AUDIO WORLD TOUR

Con Todo El Mundo
BY KHRUANGBIN
LATENIGHTTALES, 2018

By Brady O'Callahan

Rotten as they are, imperialism and our globalized mass culture can sometimes produce unique and beautiful, if unintended, hybrids. Case in point: Texas-based Khruangbin, who play the Music Hall of Williamsburg on April 13 and 14. The band's name roughly translates to "airplane" in Thai and their new album, entitled *Con Todo El Mundo*, is Spanish for "with the whole world" — fitting, since their influences span the globe.

Thai rock and roll, soul, surf rock, French yé-yé, Levantine chalice drum rhythms — Khruangbin is the manifestation of an idealized universal harmony: a melding and collaboration of cultures without stripping any of their unique voice and experience. Differences in sound and style are recognized, showcased and celebrated, all while serving the universal groove.

The elements that comprise Khruangbin's sound are not wholly original in and of themselves, but are the product of cross-cultural pollination stretching back decades. Dick Dale, for instance, the godfather of surf guitar, started out as a child accompanying his loud-plucking uncle on tarabaki drum. Thus

the pulsating picking style synonymous with surf has its roots in Lebanese music.

During France's occupation of Cambodia and Vietnam, yé-yé melded with Southeast Asian folk stylings and, during the Vietnam War, American troops brought soul, funk, R&B and the discordant guitar rock of that era east. In Thailand too — an important American waystation during the war — musicians incorporated Western influences into their traditional music.

All of this brings us to present day Texas and Khruangbin. A shared love of Thai funk and rock records from the 1960s and 1970s — preserved on the internet via niche Blogspot sites — gave the band a guiding aesthetic. Khruangbin's follow-up to their 2015 debut album, *The Universe Smiles Upon You*, incorporates a new bag of tricks learned from Indian and Middle-Eastern influences, like the Iranian instrumental funk group the Black Cats and Indian bands like the Fentones.

Con Todo El Mundo kicks off with the hot, sticky "Como Me Quieres," and stays in the groove for 43 minutes straight. Sharp drums set the pace, the bass bounces alongside and the lead guitar dances around it all. It's not "easy listening," but it's super easy to listen to, almost a sexier, modern-day take on the exoti-

ca music popular in mid-century suburban living rooms.

These songs will inevitably inspire you to dance and get lost in the groove. "Maria Tambien" sounds like a surf-rock Spaghetti Western soundtrack with a killer beat. Album-standout "Evan Finds the Third Room" invites you to say "yes" to the beat and you'll find your body unwittingly agreeing. It feels so good, you can't help it.

Some naysayers may caution against attempting to blend all these influences into one

BLENDING MANY INFLUENCES INTO ONE SOUND.

sound, but Khruangbin is a shining example that it can work, and that it works better than you'd ever imagine. *Con Todo El Mundo* really is for the whole world.

GLOBAL INFLUENCES: The members of Khruangbin.

MARY KANG

ENDLESS WAR, ENDLESS SPENDING

Continued from Page 14

A military that is involved in frequent conflicts is one that gets to test weapons in the field of battle. New technology provides a competitive edge both in combat and in the world arms trade. Selling military hardware is very profitable. This is one of just a handful of markets in which U.S. firms are still dominant.

Having an adversary that can be portrayed as a threat is helpful in efforts to rally the populace around the flag and the government, which is seen as a protector of the safety of the nation. As George Orwell put it, "War is peace."

So, the complex feeds forward. The contractors benefit. They spend tens of millions each election cycle on candidates and have spent more than a billion this decade on lobbying. Their return on this "investment" is huge, profits in the tens and hundreds of billions. Congress gets the donations and it also brings home the pork, military bases and contracts in their states or districts. An example, the Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter is being produced by contractors in 46 of the 50 states. Even Bernie Sanders supports this program, as it provides jobs in Vermont. And the military, like any bureaucracy, thrives on an expanded role, more jobs, promotions, resources and a more central role in our culture.

COSTS & BENEFITS

Militarist cheerleaders love to point out that the MIC provides a significant number of jobs. There is some truth

here, given the massive amount being spent. But consider that, beyond spending sufficient to provide reasonable defense, military expenditures provide no benefit; they don't protect us or the environment; they fail utterly to improve our quality of life. Unlike infrastructure, they are not an investment in our future.

Moreover, military spending is capital intensive and produces far fewer jobs than spending in most other sectors. A 2011 study by Robert Pollin and Heidi Garrett-Peltier of the Political Economy Research Institute found that dollar-for-dollar green energy spending produces 16 percent more jobs than military spending. Healthcare produces 31 percent more. And education yields a whopping 125 percent more. And these are investments in a brighter future.

Speaking of education, consider that the \$89 billion increase in military spending from FY17 to FY18 exceeds the \$75 billion estimated incremental cost of making public colleges tuition free for all, as Bernie Sanders proposed. And of course there are so many other needs that we could be meeting if we reined in the Pentagon's blank-check budget.

On the flip side, the GOP tax cuts for the wealthy are going to swell the deficit and provide a rationale for putting Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and many other programs on the chopping block. Clearly we'd do better to cut the military instead.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Why, you may ask, does the United States need a military with global reach? Other nations — China, Japan, Ger-

many and others — seem to be doing quite well maintaining militaries sufficient to defend their countries from attack, but without establishing bases or maintaining fleets in every part of the world.

The simple answer is, "we don't, but they — the MIC — do." The citizenry would be far better off if our nation abandoned the role of global hegemon, led the world into multilateral disarmament negotiations and redirected billions into investments in our people and infrastructure. The trick is finding a way to mobilize millions of citizens to unite behind a broad progressive platform that includes making the move away from militarism, and finding the points of political leverage to advance this agenda. Sadly, all much easier said than done.

Mark Haim is a longtime advocate for peace, justice, sustainability and climate action. He serves as director of Mid-Missouri Peaceworks, a grassroots activist group..

BOOKS



OLIVER MARTINEZ

HOW FIGHT FOR \$15 TOOK OFF

Beyond Fifteen: Immigrant Workers, Faith Activists, and the Revival of the Labor Movement

BY JONATHAN ROSENBLUM
BEACON PRESS, 2017

By Steven Sherman

Jonathan Rosenblum's *Beyond Fifteen: Immigrant Workers, Faith Activists, and the Revival of the Labor Movement* is an impressive addition to the considerable list of books this year that take stock of recent social movements and try to map out more effective strategies. His focus is on the struggle to organize airport workers in SeaTac, Washington, where he was an organizer. He delivers an especially vivid account, bringing to life concepts like respecting the priorities of community members and framing a struggle as a moral issue. With all the practicality that an inside view of an organizing campaign implies, he offers a radical vision of what needs to be done.

Like many writers on U.S. labor issues, Rosenblum looks back to the period ending in the mid-1970s, when the benefits of capitalism, in this case in the airline industry, were more equally spread. He highlights the way the stability of unionized, decent-paying jobs made possible the political career of Adam Smith, the son of a SeaTac Airport ramp serviceman, who was elected to the House of Representatives in 1996. The next generation would not be so fortunate. Airlines were deregulated in the late 1970s, ostensibly on the grounds that it would benefit consumers. That eroded protections for workers, and airlines also repeatedly exploited a change in bankruptcy laws that made it easier for corporations to escape commitments to workers — something rarely mentioned in populist accounts of “what went wrong.” The airline crisis triggered by the 9/11 attacks became a whirlwind of union-busting via bankruptcy protection, as airlines reorganized themselves, firing unionized workers and replacing them with low-wage workers hired through subcontractors.

So SeaTac Airport became a low-wage workplace, often staffed by immigrant workers doing jobs that were increasingly unhealthy and unpleasant, as corporations used their growing power to shift burdens onto workers. This was the context for the organizing campaign. Many within the union movement were rethinking both the focus on business unionism — trying to accommodate business so that workers could share the benefits — and the turn away from organizing campaigns in favor of political contributions. The massive unemployment after the economic crisis of 2008 undermined the hopes of business unionism. Many union leaders hoped that Barack Obama's election as president would lead to a “card check” law that would enable unions to organize workplaces simply by signing up a majority of the employees, but Obama never seriously pushed for it.

These failures led to an opening for a new approach epitomized by SEIU's Fight for a Fair Economy, which tried both to change the national conversation about inequality and launch large-scale private-sector organizing

campaigns. Although most of the campaign's canvasses identified unemployment as a top problem among workers, in SeaTac they learned that it was the struggle with multiple low-paying jobs, and all the consequent family and health problems, that was most urgent.

The SeaTac campaign threaded a needle through the numerous dilemmas posed by U.S. labor law, dominant union strategies and alliances between the local government and Alaska Airlines, the airport's most important carrier. Responding to community demands was an important element. A fight erupted between workers and employers over whether prayer time for Muslim workers should be treated like normal break time, as the workers desired. This isn't the sort of demand unions are accustomed to, and some cultural resistance needed to be overcome, but when the campaign embraced it, it opened up alliances with imams and mosques. Another way the campaign built community alliances was by framing its demands as moral issues, which clergy could speak about authoritatively — a tactic it used when it disrupted an Alaska Airlines shareholder meeting with speeches and gospel songs.

The unions had been reluctant to try to organize the airport workers into unions quickly, because their situation made it complicated and difficult under labor law. But with pressure from workers to move forward on unionizing, the campaign moved towards a hybrid strategy, in which it threatened a citywide referendum on what amounted to a union contract — a \$15-an-hour minimum wage — if Alaska Airlines balked at unionization. When the company did, the campaign moved forward with the referendum. As it overcame legal challenges to the vote, organizers and workers also overcame union leadership, which wanted to run the campaign in the kind of staff-heavy format they were comfortable with. Instead, the energy and knowledge of the workers was continuously foregrounded. The referendum passed by just 77 votes, and spurred increased union membership at the airport. It reverberated through neighboring Seattle, where newly elected socialist City Councilmember Kshama Sawant led the charge for a similar increase in the minimum wage, and helped inspire “Fight for \$15” campaigns nationally.

Rosenblum describes all this with verve and empathy. Individual workers, organizers, clergy and politicians come to life and illuminate aspects of both the larger context and the particular campaign. These little-known stories of contemporary working-class struggle could make for quality television drama, if scriptwriters ever tire of the drug trade.

Rosenblum compares the state of the labor movement to the protagonists of the 1960s film *The Flight of the Phoenix*. Its characters find themselves stranded in a desert after their plane crashes. Near death, they realize that

Continued on page 23

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A CREATOR OF WORLDS

BY JOHN TARLETON

With her ability to conjure up whole new worlds that challenge how we see our own and to inhabit them with deeply human characters, she was one of the great radical fiction writers of our time.

Ursula Kroeber Le Guin — daughter of a famous anthropologist and a writer, genre-busting author of more than 20 novels, volumes of poetry and translations, hundreds of short stories and numerous children's books — died, Jan. 22 in Portland, Oregon at the age of 88.

Her 1974 classic *The Dispossessed* begins, “There was a wall.” But Le Guin implored readers to gaze beyond walls; past the constraints of our present and into the possibilities that emerge when our barriers drop, to image new futures. These days, when those in power are obsessed with borders and walls and returning the world to a stultified past, her work is more relevant than ever.

Here are a few of the highlights.

The Left Hand Of Darkness (1969): Long before discussion of gender fluidity entered the mainstream, Le Guin wrote this groundbreaking work of feminist science fiction.

Set on Gethen, a wintry planet whose “ambisexual” inhabitants can change gender from month to month, *Left Hand* follows the evolving views of an intergalactic envoy whose conventional outlook on gender is challenged by the Gethenians he encounters. The book's most famous line: “The king was pregnant.”

The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas (1973): In what is perhaps the most well known of Le Guin's short stories, the prosperous citizens of Omelas enjoy the good life. But it comes with a fateful bargain — they must accept the perpetual torment of a small child locked in a squalid closet who cannot be assisted or comforted or allowed to see the light of day. As the youth of Omelas come of age, they are each brought face-to-face with the child. If they can accept what they have seen or rationalize it away, they can remain in Omelas and continue their comfortable lives. For the rebels who can't bury their consciences, they have no choice but to leave Omelas, each in search of a place in the world they can call home.

The Dispossessed (1974): Which would you prefer? To live on Urras, an Earthlike world abundant in wealth and natural resources yet plagued by brutal hierarchies of privilege? Or Annares, a barren lunar wasteland where a colony of anarchist settlers

have abolished private property, government, armies, laws, police, courts, prisons and possessive pronouns and made human solidarity the norm?

In this work, Le Guin accomplishes a rare literary feat — bringing to life a nuanced and richly imagined utopian society — while juxtaposing the two rival worlds through the story of Shevek, a brilliant Anarresti physicist and a committed anarchist who eventually tires of the groupthink of his own society. Seeking new scientific knowledge and understanding, he becomes the first member of his world to ever return to the mother planet of Urras. The rituals and behaviors that are considered normal under capitalism have never seemed stranger than when viewed through the eyes of this baffled visitor. When his journey ignites uprisings on both Urras and Anarres, Shevek must weigh his own values and act.

The Day Before The Revolution (1974): Set 170 years before the events described in *The Dispossessed*, this is a tender short story about growing old and dying. It describes the final day in the life of Laia Asieo Odo, an aging revolutionary icon whose writings will inspire the uprising that leads to the founding of Anarres. While the movement she has given her life to races toward a decisive general strike, Odo's thoughts drift through a labyrinth of memories. The story's rueful final sentence will make you sit up straight and ask yourself an important question.

The Earthsea Series (1968-2001): A boy wizard trains at a school for magic and goes forth to vanquish the evil that threatens the land. Long before the *Harry Potter* juggernaut came along, Le Guin's six-part *Earthsea* series delivered coming of age adventures that crackle with mystery and wonder. Along the way, she spurred the imagination of millions of tweens and teens, and gave adult readers plenty to think about as well.



IN HER OWN WORDS

“Hard times are coming, when we will be wanting the voices of writers who can see alternatives to how we live now, and can see through our fear-stricken society and its obsessive technologies, to other ways of

being. And even imagine some real grounds for hope. We will need writers who can remember freedom: poets, visionaries — the realists of a larger reality.

... We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable; so did the divine right of kings. ... Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings; resistance and

change often begin in art, and very often in our art — the art of words.”

— URSULA K. LE GUIN
Nov. 2014, speaking at the National Book Awards.

LIFE AFTER DEPORTATION

Continued from page 5

country in the Western Hemisphere then as now. However, the 2010 earthquake that killed 300,000 people forced many from the countryside into the cities, where the streets are crowded and intimidating, Montrevil said. “I left when I was 17 years old, I used to walk and was afraid. Now it’s different.”

Montrevil is living in a different neighborhood now than where he grew up and is trying desperately to pick up the local Creole dialect so people won’t discover he’s a U.S. deportee. He says people stigmatize deportees for “blowing an opportunity” at a better life. “I don’t want to give people the idea that I’m from the States, that I’m a deportee, so I have to be careful.”

The only consistency Montrevil has in his new life in Haiti is his cup of coffee in the morning and a daily phone call with Jahsiah and Jamya his 10-year-old daughter. “I live my life for my kids. I love my kids and I never wanted to be separated from them. This is why I put up a big fight for many years,” Montrevil said.

Life in New York is difficult, says Cauthen, who is struggling to keep up with the finances and taking care of their kids in the aftermath of Montrevil’s deportation. “Everything is a mess.”

When Montrevil was abruptly detained, one of his Ford E-350 vans, which he used for his transportation business, was left abandoned. Cauthen tried to move the vehicle, but Montrevil had the keys on him and the van eventually got a boot on it. Montrevil’s four employees will have to find a new job and Cauthen is trying to wind down the van service on top of her regular day job and taking care of the kids. “It’s crazy — me trying to get things in order when he was the boss is hard.”

LIFE WITHOUT DAD

Jahsiah says life is different without his dad, who he describes as “fun.” “He picks

me up after school on Fridays and after that we usually just go hang out, maybe at Chuck E. Cheese or Dave & Buster’s.”

Jahsiah is building a website about Montrevil’s case to raise awareness about the unfair treatment of immigrants. He thinks it’s especially unfair that his father is being deported for a crime he committed decades ago. “He did a crime when he was 19 years old. He should be able to go on and live his life as a regular human being.”

Janiah says she needs Montrevil in order to apply for financial aid and might have to take a semester off to save up money.

Montrevil is heartbroken that he can’t be there for his children anymore, he said. “I grew up without a father, I never want that to happen to my kids. This is a tough situation for all of us, but what can I do?”

He’ll continue to fight his case in court, but after years of struggle he’s lost faith in the U.S. immigration system. He regrets putting his life on hold for years in America, waiting for a resolution to his case. “I think that was a big mistake. I lost all those good years,” Montrevil said. “I’m just going to focus on what I can do here. If I get lucky, I’ll come back, but I have to make a life here now.” He is hoping Cauthen can send one of his vans to Haiti so he can start a transportation business there.

In the meantime, Cauthen will focus on her kids and supporting them as best as she can while they wait for a final outcome on Montrevil’s case. “I don’t want my kids to be one of those stories that ‘Oh, my dad was deported. That’s why I got arrested,’” she said.

Cauthen intends to keep fighting and hopes to go to law school someday so she can help change the immigration system in the United States. “[ICE] thought that by them deporting him that the Jean Montrevil story is going to die [and] it’s not. I’m going to advocate for him to the best of my ability because what they did is wrong.”

FIGHT FOR \$15

Continued from page 21

they have the parts to make a new plane from the wreckage and manage to fly to safety. Rosenblum implores readers to recognize that the union movement as we know it will not be revived, but lying in the wreckage — the organizations, coalitions, practices that have been developed — are the materials needed to

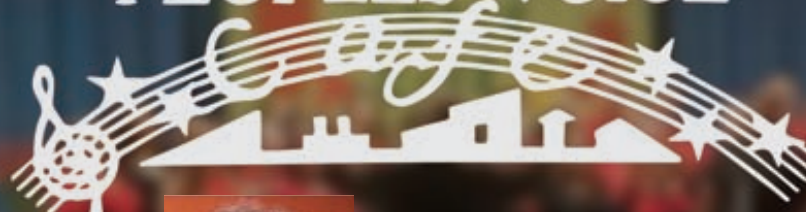
build something new, a social-movement union. His advice is to “aim higher,” offering a moral critique of the capitalist system; “reach wider,” by redefining the labor movement to include all workers; and “build deeper,” by developing workers’ leadership skills and taking their ideas seriously.

The writers of “what is to be done” literature are often polarized between academic dreamers, who offer grand alternatives to

the present but little in the way of a roadmap of how to get there, and experienced organizers, who suggest refinements of present-day practice but don’t seem to fully grasp the depths of the transformation necessary. Jonathan Rosenblum does justice to both sides in his worthy contribution to this literature.

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